





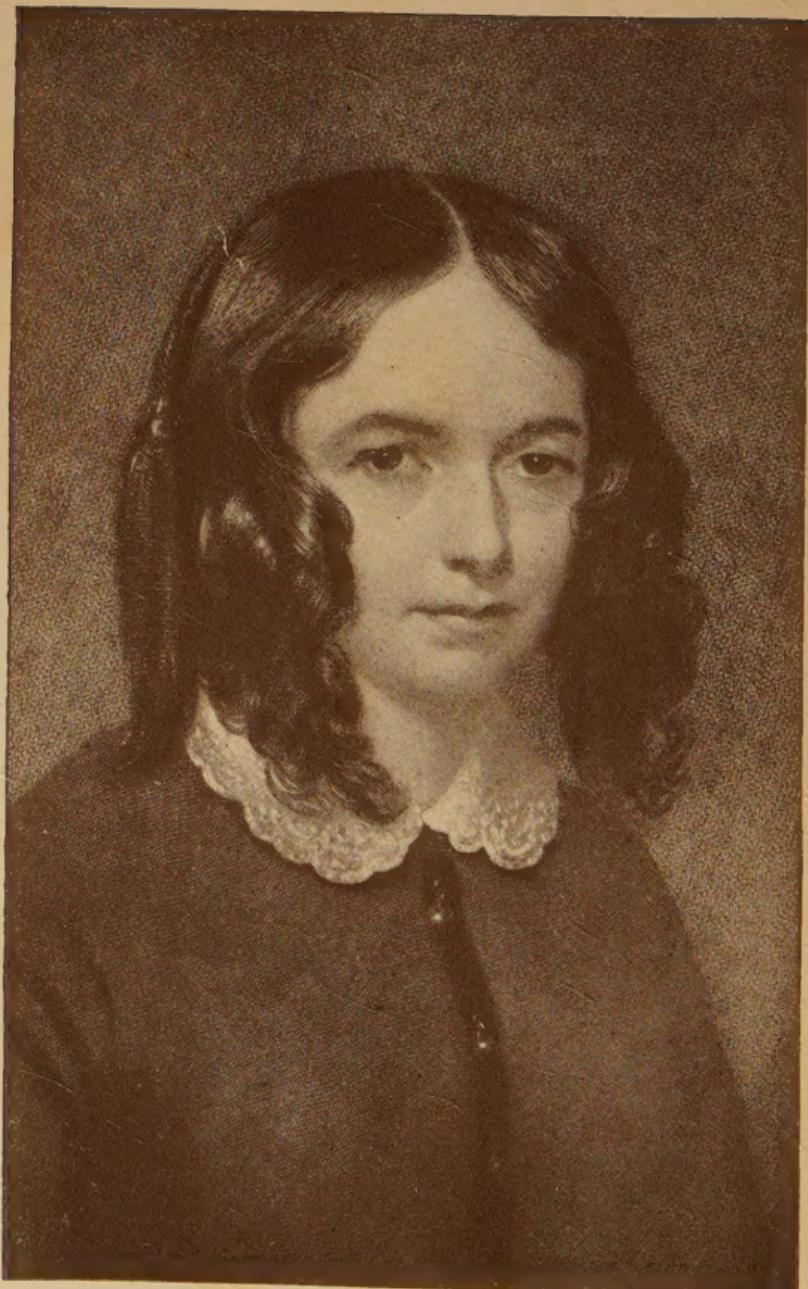
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THE POCKET UNIVERSITY







ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

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THE  
POCKET UNIVERSITY  
VOLUME XI

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POETRY  
IDYLS AND STORIES IN VERSE

EDITED BY  
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## INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

THIS volume of *Little Masterpieces of English Poetry* contains idyls and stories in verse. It covers a region lying between the ballad, which is almost, if not altogether, objective and impersonal, and the descriptive and reflective lyric, in which the personal thought and feeling of the poet is the main element. The poems in this volume are marked by a blending of the two elements. They are narratives which have in them something of the reflective and descriptive element. Of course this must not be taken as a hard and fast classification, nor are the divisions within the volume to be so regarded. Many of the poems here have aspects and relations which connect them with the poems in other groups.

The idyls have been separated from the rest on the principle of classification, that they are poems which call up pictures of life and landscape for the sake of the pictures themselves. There is emotional coloring and usually a human figure or figures in the foreground. The difficulty arises with poems like Shelley's *Sensitive Plant* and Lowell's *Rhæcus*. The former, which has in it something of the elegy and something of the allegory, has been put with the idyls because the picture which it calls up seems to be the principal

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

thing. On the other hand, *Rhaecus* is in many respects truly an idyl, but finds place among poems of another class where the legendary and symbolic element is thought to predominate.

Longfellow's *The Building of the Ship* and several others are not mere stories. They are allegorical and symbolic. Their purpose is to teach a lesson or to indicate a similitude. Most of the stories also which deal with real or invented myth and legend are of the same general class, so that we have thought it convenient and fitting to put these legendary and allegorical pieces together in one group within the volume.

Another variety of story in verse, mainly very recent in composition, bears striking resemblance in its aim and effect, its intensified unity, to the now pretty generally recognized prose-form, the short story,—as distinguished from the story which happens to be short. An incident is narrated, as in Sill's *The Fool's Prayer* and Bret Harte's *Ramon*, or a situation is described in narrative form, as in Hood's *The Dream of Eugene Aram*, not for the story, but for its emotional value. This class is closely connected with the dramatic monologue and the character-piece. Arnold's *The Forsaken Merman* and Mrs. Browning's *Mother and Poet* have been considered far enough over the border to be included here. Such stories may be said to differ from idyls mainly in their more dramatic quality. Three or four poems of death and bereavement, pointing out a connection with elegiac verse, have

## Introduction

been put together in this section, because they seemed dramatic and single in their emotional appeal.

After the idyls, the legendary and allegorical pieces, and the short-stories in verse have been taken out, there yet remain a large number of tales and brief epics. There is no word to denote the short epic, though the epic quality manifests itself quite as plainly in short poems as in long ones. There are, besides, short romances and plain tales of every-day life. These poems have been grouped together in the largest section of the volume and stand third in the arrangement. Some of the poems, as Byron's *The Destruction of Sennacherib*, are ballad-like. *The Heathen Chinee* has in it perhaps something of the ballad and something of the character-piece. It has been put here with other poems of a homely nature rather than elsewhere. The same may be said of Holmes's *The One-Hoss Shay*, which is also a hard poem to classify.

The arrangement of this section and of the whole volume, aside from the tentative and rather difficult boundaries, has been made with a view to harmonious juxtaposition and easy transition. Far greater difficulties than those of arrangement have confronted us in the matter of selection. Much of the finest poetry in the language is short narrative; and some inevitable choices have been debarred, because they were considered somewhat too long to be included in a collection of little masterpieces.

HARDIN CRAIG.



# IDYLS



## A KING LIVED LONG AGO

From *Pippa Passes*

A KING lived long ago,  
In the morning of the world,  
When earth was nigher heaven than now;  
And the king's locks curled,  
Disparting o'er a forehead full  
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn  
Of some sacrificial bull—  
Only calm as a babe new-born:  
For he was got to a sleepy mood,  
So safe from all decrepitude, 10  
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,  
(The gods so loved him while he dreamed)  
That, having lived thus long, there seemed  
No need the king should ever die.  
Among the rocks his city was:  
Before his palace, in the sun,  
He sat to see his people pass,  
And judge them every one  
From its threshold of smooth stone.  
They haled him many a valley-thief  
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief  
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat, 20

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found  
On the sea-sand left aground;  
And sometimes clung about his feet,  
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,  
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak  
Of one with sullen thickset brows:  
And sometimes from the prison-house  
The angry priests a pale wretch brought, 30  
Who through some chink had pushed and  
pressed  
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,  
Worm-like into the temple,—caught  
He was by the very god,  
Who ever in the darkness strode  
Backward and forward, keeping watch  
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!  
These, all and every one,  
The king judged, sitting in the sun.  
His councillors, on left and right, 40  
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise  
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes  
Where the very blue had turned to white.  
'T is said, a Python scared one day  
The breathless city, till he came,  
With forked tongue and eyes on flame,  
Where the old king sat to judge alway;  
But when he saw the sweepy hair  
Girt with a crown of berries rare  
Which the god will hardly give to wear 50  
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare  
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,  
At his wondrous forest rites,—

## Dora

Seeing this he did not dare  
Approach that threshold in the sun,  
Assault the old king smiling there.  
Such grace had kings when the world began !

1841.

*Robert Browning.*

## DORA

WITH farmer Allan at the farm abode  
William and Dora. William was his son,  
And she his niece. He often look'd at them,  
And often thought, "I'll make them man and  
wife."

Now Dora felt her uncle's will in all,  
And yearn'd toward William; but the youth,  
because

He had always been with her in the house,  
Thought not of Dora.

Then there came a day  
When Allan call'd his son, and said: "My son,  
I married late, but I would wish to see      10  
My grandchild on my knees before I die;  
And I have set my heart upon a match.  
Now therefore look to Dora; she is well  
To look to; thrifty too beyond her age.  
She is my brother's daughter; he and I  
Had once hard words, and parted, and he died  
In foreign lands; but for his sake I bred  
His daughter Dora. Take her for your wife;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

For I have wish'd this marriage night and day,  
For many years." But William answered  
short: 20

"I cannot marry Dora; by my life,  
I will not marry Dora!" Then the old man  
Was wroth, and doubled up his hands, and said:  
"You will not, boy! you dare to answer thus!  
But in my time a father's word was law,  
And so it shall be now for me. Look to it;  
Consider, William, take a month to think,  
And let me have an answer to my wish;  
Or, by the Lord that made me, you shall pack,  
And never more darken my doors again." 30  
But William answer'd madly, bit his lips,  
And broke away. The more he look'd at her  
The less he liked her; and his ways were harsh;  
But Dora bore them meekly. Then before  
The month was out he left his father's house,  
And hired himself to work within the fields;  
And half in love, half spite, he woo'd and wed  
A laborer's daughter, Mary Morrison.

Then, when the bells were ringing, Allan  
call'd

His niece and said: "My girl, I love you  
well; 40

But if you speak with him that was my son,  
Or change a word with her he calls his wife,  
My home is none of yours. My will is law."  
And Dora promised, being meek. She thought,  
"It cannot be; my uncle's mind will change!"

And days went on, and there was born a boy  
To William; then distresses came on him;

## Dora

And day by day he passed his father's gate,  
Heart-broken, and his father helped him not.  
But Dora stored what little she could save, 50  
And sent it them by stealth, nor did they know  
Who sent it; till at last a fever seized  
On William, and in harvest time he died.

Then Dora went to Mary. Mary sat  
And look'd with tears upon her boy, and  
thought

Hard things of Dora. Dora came and said:  
"I have obey'd my uncle until now,  
And I have sinn'd, for it was all thro' me  
This evil came on William at the first.  
But, Mary, for the sake of him that's gone, 60  
And for your sake, the woman that he chose,  
And for this orphan, I am come to you.  
You know there has not been for these five years  
So full a harvest. Let me take the boy,  
And I will set him in my uncle's eye  
Among the wheat; that when his heart is glad  
Of the full harvest, he may see the boy,  
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone."

And Dora took the child, and went her way  
Across the wheat, and sat upon a mound 70  
That was unsown, where many poppies grew.  
Far off the farmer came into the field  
And spied her not, for none of all his men  
Dare tell him Dora waited with the child;  
And Dora would have risen and gone to him,  
But her heart fail'd her; and the reapers reap'd,  
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

But when the morrow came, she rose and took

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The child once more, and sat upon the mound;  
And made a little wreath of all the flowers 80  
That grew about, and tied it round his hat  
To make him pleasing in her uncle's eye.  
Then when the farmer pass'd into the field  
He spied her, and he left his men at work,  
And came and said: "Where were you yes-  
terday?"

Whose child is that? What are you doing  
here?"

So Dora cast her eyes upon the ground,  
And answer'd softly, "This is William's child!"  
"And did I not," said Allan, "did I not  
Forbid you, Dora?" Dora said again: 90  
"Do with me as you will, but take the child,  
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone!"  
And Allan said, "I see it is a trick  
Got up betwixt you and the woman there.  
I must be taught my duty, and by you!  
You knew my word was law, and yet you dared  
To slight it. Well—for I will take the boy;  
But go you hence, and never see me more."

So saying, he took the boy that cried aloud  
And struggled hard. The wreath of flowers  
fell 100

At Dora's feet. She bow'd upon her hands,  
And the boy's cry came to her from the field  
More and more distant. She bow'd down her  
head,

Remembering the day when first she came,  
And all the things that had been. She bow'd  
down

## Dora

And wept in secret; and the reapers reap'd,  
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

Then Dora went to Mary's house, and stood  
Upon the threshold. Mary saw the boy  
Was not with Dora. She broke out in praise 110  
To God, that help'd her in her widowhood.  
And Dora said, "My uncle took the boy;  
But, Mary, let me live and work with you:  
He says that he will never see me more."

Then answer'd Mary, "This shall never be,  
That thou shouldst take my trouble on thyself;  
And, now I think, he shall not have the boy,  
For he will teach him hardness, and to slight  
His mother. Therefore thou and I will go,  
And I will have my boy, and bring him

home;

120

And I will beg of him to take thee back:  
But if he will not take thee back again,  
Then thou and I will live within one house,  
And work for William's child, until he grows  
Of age to help us."

So the women kiss'd

Each other, and set out, and reach'd the farm.  
The door was off the latch; they peep'd, and  
saw

The boy set up betwixt his grandsire's knees,  
Who thrust him in the hollows of his arm,  
And clapped him on the hands and on the  
cheeks,

130

Like one that loved him; and the lad stretch'd  
out

And babbled for the golden seal, that hung

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

From Allan's watch and sparkled by the fire.  
Then they came in; but when the boy beheld  
His mother, he cried out to come to her;  
And Allan set him down, and Mary said:

“O father!—if you let me call you so—  
I never came a-begging for myself,  
Or William, or this child; but now I come  
For Dora; take her back, she loves you well. 14c

O Sir, when William died, he died at peace  
With all men; for I ask'd him, and he said  
He could not ever rue his marrying me—  
I had been a patient wife: but, Sir, he said  
That he was wrong to cross his father thus:  
'God bless him!' he said, 'and may he never  
know

The troubles I have gone thro'!' Then he  
turn'd

His face and pass'd—unhappy that I am!  
But now, Sir, let me have my boy, for you  
Will make him hard, and he will learn to  
slight 150

His father's memory; and take Dora back,  
And let all this be as it was before.”

So Mary said, and Dora hid her face  
By Mary. There was silence in the room;  
And all at once the old man burst in sobs:—  
“I have been to blame—to blame. I have kill'd  
my son.

I have kill'd him—but I loved him—my dear  
son.

May God forgive me!—I have been to blame.  
Kiss me, my children.”

## The Gardener's Daughter

Then they clung about  
The old man's neck, and kiss'd him many  
times. 160  
And all the man was broken with remorse;  
And all his love came back a hundred-fold;  
And for three hours he sobb'd o'er William's  
child  
Thinking of William.

So those four abode  
Within one house together; and as years  
Went forward, Mary took another mate;  
But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

1842.

*Lord Tennyson.*

## THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER

### OR, THE PICTURES

THIS morning is the morning of the day,  
When I and Eustace from the city went  
To see the Gardener's Daughter; I and he,  
Brothers in Art; a friendship so complete  
Portion'd in halves between us, that we grew  
The fable of the city where we dwelt.

My Eustace might have sat for Hercules;  
So muscular he spread, so broad of breast.  
He, by some law that holds in love, and draws  
The greater to the lesser, long desired 10  
A certain miracle of symmetry,  
A miniature of loveliness, all grace

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Summ'd up and closed in little;—Juliet, she  
So light of foot, so light of spirit—oh, she  
To me myself, for some three careless moons,  
The summer pilot of an empty heart  
Unto the shores of nothing! Know you not  
Such touches are but embassies of love,  
To tamper with the feelings, ere he found  
Empire for life? but Eustace painted her, 20  
And said to me, she sitting with us then,  
“When will *you* paint like this?” and I replied,  
(My words were half in earnest, half in jest,)  
“T is not your work, but Love’s. Love, unper-  
ceived,  
A more ideal Artist he than all,  
Came, drew your pencil from you, made those  
eyes  
Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair  
More black than ashbuds in the front of  
March.”  
And Juliet answer’d laughing, “Go and see  
The Gardener’s Daughter: trust me, after  
that, 30  
You scarce can fail to match his masterpiece.”  
And up we rose, and on the spur we went.  
Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite  
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.  
News from the humming city comes to it  
In sound of funeral or of marriage bells;  
And, sitting muffled in dark leaves, you hear  
The windy clang of the minster clock;  
Although between it and the garden lies  
A league of grass, wash’d by a slow broad  
stream, 40

## The Gardener's Daughter

That, stirr'd with languid pulses of the oar,  
Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,  
Barge-laden, to three arches of a bridge  
Crown'd with the minster-towers.

The fields between

Are dewy-fresh, browsed by deep-udder'd  
kine,  
And all about the large lime feathers low,  
The lime a summer home of murmurous  
wings.

In that still place she, hoarded in herself,  
Grew, seldom seen; not less among us lived  
Her fame from lip to lip. Who had not  
heard

50

Of Rose, the Gardener's Daughter? Where  
was he,

So blunt in memory, so old at heart,  
At such a distance from his youth in grief,  
That, having seen, forgot? The common  
mouth,

So gross to express delight, in praise of her  
Grew oratory. Such a lord is Love,  
And Beauty such a mistress of the world.

And if I said that Fancy, led by Love,  
Would play with flying forms and images,  
Yet this is also true, that, long before  
I look'd upon her, when I heard her name  
My heart was like a prophet to my heart,  
And told me I should love. A crowd of hopes,  
That sought to sow themselves like winged  
seeds,

Born out of everything I heard and saw,  
Flutter'd about my senses and my soul;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And vague desires, like fitful blasts of balm  
To one that travels quickly, made the air  
Of Life delicious, and all kinds of thought,  
That verged upon them, sweeter than the  
dream

70

Dream'd by a happy man, when the dark  
East,

Unseen, is brightening to his bridal morn.

And sure this orbit of the memory folds  
For ever in itself the day we went  
To see her. All the land in flowery squares,  
Beneath a broad and equal-blowing wind,  
Smelt of the coming summer, as one large  
cloud

Drew downward: but all else of heaven was  
pure

Up to the Sun, and May from verge to verge.  
And May with me from head to heel. And  
now,

80

As tho' t were yesterday, as tho' it were  
The hour just flown, that morn with all its  
sound,

(For those old Mays had thrice the life of  
these,)

Rings in mine ears. The steer forgot to graze,  
And, where the hedge-row cuts the pathway,  
stood.

Leaning his horns into the neighbor field,  
And lowing to his fellows. From the woods  
Came voices of the well-contented doves.  
The lark could scarce get out his notes for joy,  
But shook his song together as he near'd

90

## The Gardener's Daughter

His happy home, the ground. To left and right,

The cuckoo told his name to all the hills ;  
The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm ;  
The redcap whistled ; and the nightingale  
Sang loud, as tho' he were the bird of day.

And Eustace turn'd, and smiling said to me,  
" Hear how the bushes echo ! by my life,  
These birds have joyful thoughts. Think you  
they sing

Like poets, from the vanity of song ?  
Or have they any sense of why they sing ? 100  
And would they praise the heavens for what  
they have ? "

And I made answer, " Were there nothing  
else

For which to praise the heavens but only love,  
That only love were cause enough for praise."

Lightly he laugh'd, as one that read my  
thought,

And on we went ; but ere an hour had pass'd,  
We reach'd a meadow slanting to the North ;  
Down which a well-worn pathway courted us  
To one green wicket in a privet hedge ;  
This, yielding, gave into a grassy walk 110  
Thro' crowded lilac-ambush trimly pruned ;  
And one warm gust, full-fed with perfume,  
blew

Beyond us, as we enter'd in the cool.  
The garden stretches southward. In the  
midst

A cedar spread his dark-green layers of shade.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The garden-glasses glanced, and momently  
The twinkling laurel scatter'd silver lights.

“Eustace,” I said, “this wonder keeps the  
house.”

He nodded, but a moment afterwards  
He cried, “Look! look!” Before he ceased  
I turn'd, 120

And, ere a star can wink, beheld her there.

For up the porch there grew an Eastern  
rose,

That, flowering high, the last night's gale had  
caught,

And blown across the walk. One arm aloft—  
Gown'd in pure white, that fitted to the  
shape—

Holding the bush, to fix it back, she stood,  
A single stream of all her soft brown hair  
Pour'd on one side: the shadow of the flowers  
Stole all the golden gloss, and, wavering  
Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist— 130  
Ah, happy shade—and still went wavering  
down,

But, ere it touch'd a foot, that might have  
danced

The greensward into greener circles, dipt,  
And mix'd with shadows of the common  
ground!

But the full day dwelt on her brows, and  
sunn'd

Her violet eyes, and all her Hebe bloom,  
And doubled his own warmth against her lips,  
And on the bounteous wave of such a breast

## The Gardener's Daughter

As never pencil drew. Half light, half shade,  
She stood, a sight to make an old man  
young. 140

So rapt, we near'd the house ; but she, a  
Rose

In roses, mingled with her fragrant toil,  
Nor heard us come, nor from her tendance  
turn'd

Into the world without; till close at hand,  
And almost ere I knew mine own intent,  
This murmur broke the stillness of that air  
Which brooded round about her:

" Ah, one rose,  
One rose, but one, by those fair fingers cull'd,  
Were worth a hundred kisses press'd on lips  
Less exquisite than thine."

She look'd: but all 150

Suffused with blushes—neither self-possess'd  
Nor startled, but betwixt this mood and that,  
Divided in a graceful quiet—paused,  
And dropt the branch she held, and turning,  
        wound

Her looser hair in braid, and stirr'd her lips  
For some sweet answer, tho' no answer came,  
Nor yet refused the rose, but granted it,  
And moved away, and left me, statue-like,  
In act to render thanks.

I, that whole day,  
Saw her no more, altho' I linger'd there 160  
Till every daisy slept, and Love's white star  
Beam'd thro' the thicken'd cedar in the dusk.

So home we went, and all the livelong way

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

With solemn gibe did Eustace banter me.

"Now," said he, "will you climb the top of Art.  
You cannot fail but work in hues to dim  
The Titanic Flora. Will you match  
My Juliet? you, not you,—the Master, Love,  
A more ideal Artist he than all."

So home I went, but could not sleep for  
joy,

170

Reading her perfect features in the gloom,  
Kissing the rose she gave me o'er and o'er,  
And shaping faithful record of the glance  
That graced the giving—such a noise of life  
Swarm'd in the golden present, such a voice  
Call'd to me from the years to come, and such  
A length of bright horizon rimm'd the dark.  
And all that night I heard the watchman peal  
The sliding season: all that night I heard  
The heavy clocks knolling the drowsy  
hours.

180

The drowsy hours, dispensers of all good,  
O'er the mute city stole with folded wings,  
Distilling odors on me as they went  
To greet their fairer sisters of the East.

Love at first sight, first-born, and heir to all,  
Made this night thus. Henceforward squall  
nor storm

Could keep me from that Eden where she  
dwelt.

Light pretexts drew me; sometimes a Dutch  
love

For tulips; then for roses, moss or musk,  
To grace my city rooms; or fruits and  
cream

190

## The Gardener's Daughter

Served in the weeping elm; and more and  
more

A word could bring the color to my cheek;  
A thought would fill my eyes with happy dew,  
Love trebled life within me, and with each  
The year increased.

The daughters of the year,  
One after one, thro' that still garden pass'd;  
Each garlanded with her peculiar flower  
Danced into light, and died into the shade;  
And each in passing touch'd with some new  
grace

Or seem'd to touch her, so that day by day, <sup>209</sup>  
Like one that never can be wholly known,  
Her beauty grew; till Autumn brought an  
hour

For Eustace, when I heard his deep "I will,"  
Breathed, like the covenant of a God, to hold  
From thence thro' all the worlds: but I rose up  
Full of his bliss, and following her dark eyes  
Felt earth as air beneath me, till I reach'd  
The wicket-gate, and found her standing there.

There sat we down upon a garden mound,  
Two mutually enfolded; Love, the third, <sup>210</sup>  
Between us, in the circle of his arms  
Enwound us both; and over many a range  
Of waning lime the gray cathedral towers,  
Across a hazy glimmer of the west,  
Reveal'd their shining windows: from them  
clash'd  
The bells; we listen'd; with the time we  
play'd,  
We spoke of other things; we coursed about

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The subject most at heart, more near and  
near,

Like doves about a dovecote, wheeling round  
The central wish, until we settled there. 220

Then, in that time and place, I spoke to her,  
Requiring, tho' I knew it was mine own,  
Yet for the pleasure that I took to hear,  
Requiring at her hand the greatest gift,  
A woman's heart, the heart of her I loved;  
And in that time and place she answer'd me,  
And in the compass of three little words,  
More musical than ever came in one,  
The silver fragments of a broken voice,  
Made me most happy, faltering, "I am  
thine." 230

Shall I cease here? Is this enough to say  
That my desire, like all strongest hopes,  
By its own energy fulfill'd itself,  
Merged in completion? Would you learn at  
full

How passion rose thro' circumstantial grades  
Beyond all grades develop'd? and indeed  
I had not staid so long to tell you all,  
But while I mused came Memory with sad  
eyes,

Holding the folded annals of my youth;  
And while I mused, Love with knit brows  
went by, 240

And with a flying finger swept my lips,  
And spake, "Be wise: not easily forgiven  
Are those who, setting wide the doors that  
bar

## The Gardener's Daughter

The secret bridal chambers of the heart,  
Let in the day." Here, then, my words have  
end.

Yet might I tell of meetings, of farewells—  
Of that which came between, more sweet than  
each,

In whispers, like the whispers of the leaves  
That tremble round a nightingale—in sighs  
Which perfect Joy, perplex'd for utterance, 250  
Stole from her sister Sorrow. Might I not tell  
Of difference, reconciliation, pledges given,  
And vows, where there was never need of  
vows,

And kisses, where the heart on one wild leap  
Hung tranced from all pulsation, as above  
The heavens between their fairy fleeces pale  
Sow'd all their mystic gulfs with fleeting  
stars;

Or while the balmy glooming, crescent-lit,  
Spread the light haze along the river-shores,  
And in the hollows; or as once we met 260  
Unheedful, tho' beneath a whispering rain  
Night slid down one long stream of sighing  
wind,

And in her bosom bore the baby, Sleep.

But this whole hour your eyes have been  
intent

On that veil'd picture—veil'd, for what it  
holds

May not be dwelt on by the common day.  
This prelude has prepared thee. Raise thy  
soul;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Make thine heart ready with thine eyes: the  
time  
Is come to raise the veil.

Behold her there,  
As I beheld her ere she knew my heart, 270  
My first, last love; the idol of my youth,  
The darling of my manhood, and, alas!  
Now the most blessed memory of mine age.

1842.

*Lord Tennyson.*

## LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

WHERE the quiet-colored end of evening smiles  
Miles and miles  
On the solitary pastures where our sheep  
Half-asleep  
Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or  
stop

As they crop—  
Was the site once of a city great and gay,  
(So they say)  
Of our country's very capital, its prince  
Ages since  
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far  
Peace or war. 12

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,  
As you see,  
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills  
From the hills

## Love Among the Ruins

Intersect and give a name to, (else they run  
    Into one,)  
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires  
    Up like fires  
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall  
    Bounding all,  
Made of marble, men might march on nor be  
    pressed,  
        Twelve abreast.

24

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass  
    Never was!  
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads  
    And embeds  
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
    Stock or stone—  
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe  
    Long ago;  
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of  
    shame  
        Struck them tame;  
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold  
    Bought and sold.

36

Now,—the single little turret that remains  
    On the plains,  
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd  
    Overscored,  
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom  
    winks  
        Through the chinks—

20

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient  
time

Sprang sublime,  
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots  
traced

As they raced,  
And the monarch and his minions and his dames  
Viewed the games. 48

And I know, while thus the quiet-colored eve  
Smiles to leave  
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece  
In such peace,  
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray  
Melt away—  
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair  
Waits me there  
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul  
For the goal,  
When the king looked, where she looks now,  
breathless, dumb  
Till I come. 66

But he looked upon the city, every side,  
Far and wide,  
All the mountains topped with temples, all the  
grades'  
Colonnades,  
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,  
All the men!

## The Miller's Daughter

When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,  
Either hand  
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace  
Of my face,  
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech  
Each on each. 72

In one year they sent a million fighters forth  
South and North,  
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high  
As the sky,  
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—  
Gold, of course.  
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!  
Earth's returns  
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!  
Shut them in,  
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!  
Love is best.

1855.

*Robert Browning.*

## THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER

I SEE the wealthy miller yet,  
His double chin, his portly size,  
And who that knew him could forget  
The busy wrinkles round his eyes?

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The slow wise smile that, round about  
His dusty forehead dryly curl'd,  
Seem'd half-within and half-without,  
And full of dealings with the world? 8

In yonder chair I see him sit,  
Three fingers round the old silver cup—  
I see his gray eyes twinkle yet  
At his own jest—gray eyes lit up  
With summer lightnings of a soul  
So full of summer warmth, so glad,  
So healthy, sound, and clear and whole,  
His memory scarce can make me sad. 16

Yet fill my glass: give me one kiss:  
My own sweet Alice, we must die.  
There's somewhat in this world amiss  
Shall be unriddled by and by.  
There's somewhat flows to us in life,  
But more is taken quite away.  
Pray, Alice, pray, my darling wife,  
That we may die the self-same day. 24

Have I not found a happy earth?  
I least should breathe a thought of pain.  
Would God renew me from my birth  
I'd almost live my life again.  
So sweet it seems with thee to walk,  
And once again to woo thee mine—  
It seems in after-dinner talk  
Across the walnuts and the wine— 32

## The Miller's Daughter

To be the long and listless boy  
Late-left an orphan of the squire,  
Where this old mansion mounted high  
Looks down upon the village spire:  
For even here, where I and you  
Have lived and loved alone so long,  
Each morn my sleep was broken thro'  
By some wild skylark's matin song.

40

And oft I heard the tender dove  
In firry woodlands making moan;  
But ere I saw your eyes, my love,  
I had no motion of my own.  
For scarce my life with fancy play'd  
Before I dream'd that pleasant dream—  
Still hither thither idly sway'd  
Like those long mosses in the stream.

48

Or from the bridge I lean'd to hear  
The milldam rushing down with noise,  
And see the minnows everywhere  
In crystal eddies glance and poise,  
The tall flag-flowers when they sprung  
Below the range of stepping-stones,  
Or those three chestnuts near, that hung  
In masses thick with milky cones.

56

But, Alice, what an hour was that,  
When after roving in the woods  
('T was April then), I came and sat  
Below the chestnuts, when their buds

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Were glistening to the breezy blue;  
And on the slope, an absent fool,  
I cast me down, nor thought of you,  
But angled in the higher pool.

64

A love-song I had somewhere read,  
An echo from a measured strain,  
Beat time to nothing in my head  
From some odd corner of the brain.  
It haunted me, the morning long,  
With weary sameness in the rhymes,  
The phantom of a silent song,  
That went and came a thousand times.

72

Then leapt a trout. In lazy mood  
I watch'd the little circles die;  
They past into the level flood,  
And there a vision caught my eye;  
The reflex of a beauteous form,  
A glowing arm, a gleaming neck,  
As when a sunbeam wavers warm  
Within the dark and dimpled beck.

80

For you remember, you had set,  
That morning, on the casement-edge  
A long green box of mignonette,  
And you were leaning from the ledge:  
And when I raised my eyes, above  
They met with two so full and bright—  
Such eyes! I swear to you, my love,  
That these have never lost their light.

88

## The Miller's Daughter

I loved, and love dispell'd the fear  
That I should die an early death:  
For love possess'd the atmosphere,  
And fill'd the breast with purer breath.  
My mother thought, "What ails the boy?"  
For I was alter'd, and began  
To move about the house with joy,  
And with the certain step of man.

96

I loved the brimming wave that swam  
Thro' quiet meadows round the mill,  
The sleepy pool above the dam,  
The pool beneath it never still,  
The meal-sacks on the whiten'd floor,  
The dark round of the dripping wheel,  
The very air about the door  
Made misty with the floating meal.

104

And oft in ramblings on the wold,  
When April nights began to blow,  
And April's crescent glimmer'd cold,  
I saw the village lights below;  
I knew your taper far away,  
And full at heart of trembling hope,  
From off the wold I came, and lay  
Upon the freshly-flower'd slope.

112

The deep brook groan'd beneath the mill;  
And "by that lamp," I thought, "she sits!"  
The white chalk-quarry from the hill  
Gleam'd to the flying moon by fits.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

“O that I were beside her now!  
O will she answer if I call?  
O would she give me vow for vow,  
Sweet Alice, if I told her all?” 120

Sometimes I saw you sit and spin:  
And, in the pauses of the wind,  
Sometimes I heard you sing within;  
Sometimes your shadow cross'd the blind.  
At last you rose and moved the light,  
And the long shadow of the chair  
Flitted across into the night,  
And all the casement darken'd there. 128

But when at last I dared to speak,  
The lanes, you know, were white with May,  
Your ripe lips moved not, but your cheek  
Flush'd like the coming of the day;  
And so it was—half-sly, half-shy,  
You would, and would not, little one!  
Although I pleaded tenderly,  
And you and I were all alone. 136

And slowly was my mother brought  
To yield consent to my desire:  
She wish'd me happy, but she thought  
I might have look'd a little higher;  
And I was young—too young to wed:  
“Yet must I love her for your sake;  
Go fetch your Alice here,” she said:  
Her eyelid quiver'd as she spake. 144

## The Miller's Daughter

And down I went to fetch my bride:  
But, Alice, you were ill at ease;  
This dress and that by turns you tried,  
Too fearful that you should not please.  
I loved you better for your fears,  
I knew you could not look but well;  
And dews, that would have fall'n in tears,  
I kiss'd away before they fell. 152

I watch'd the little flutterings,  
The doubt my mother would not see;  
She spoke at large of many things,  
And at the last she spoke of me;  
And turning look'd upon your face,  
As near this door you sat apart,  
And rose, and, with a silent grace  
Approaching, press'd your heart to  
heart. 160

Ah, well—but sing the foolish song  
I gave you, Alice, on the day  
When, arm in arm, we went along,  
A pensive pair, and you were gay  
With bridal flowers—that I may seem,  
As in the nights of old, to lie  
Beside the mill-wheel in the stream,  
While those full chestnuts whisper by. 168

It is the miller's daughter,  
And she is grown so dear, so dear,  
That I would be the jewel  
That trembles in her ear:  
For hid in ringlets day and night,  
I'd touch her neck so warm and white. 174

# Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And I would be the girdle  
About her dainty, dainty waist,  
And her heart would beat against me,  
In sorrow and in rest:  
And I should know if it beat right,  
I 'd clasp it round so close and tight. 180

And I would be the necklace,  
And all day long to fall and rise  
Upon her balmy bosom,  
With her laughter or her sighs,  
And I would lie so light, so light,  
I scarce should be unclasp'd at night. 186

A trifle, sweet! which true love spells—  
True love interprets—right alone.  
His light upon the letter dwells,  
For all the spirit is his own.  
So, if I waste words now, in truth  
You must blame Love. His early rage  
Had force to make me rhyme in youth,  
And makes me talk too much in age. 194

And now those vivid hours are gone,  
Like mine own life to me thou art,  
Where Past and Present, wound in one,  
Do make a garland for the heart:  
So sing that other song I made,  
Half-anger'd with my happy lot,  
The day, when in the chestnut shade  
I found the blue Forget-me-not. 202

Love that hath us in the net,  
Can he pass, and we forget?  
Many suns arise and set.  
Many a chance the years beget.  
Love the gift is Love the debt.

Even so. 208

## The Miller's Daughter

Love is hurt with jar and fret.  
Love is made a vague regret.  
Eyes with idle tears are wet.  
Idle habit links us yet.  
What is love? for we forget:

Ah, no! no!

214

Look thro' mine eyes with thine. True wife,  
Round my true heart thine arms intwine  
My other dearer life in life,  
Look thro' my very soul with thine!  
Untouch'd with any shade of years,  
May those kind eyes for ever dwell!  
They have not shed a many tears,  
Dear eyes, since first I knew them well. 222

Yet tears they shed: they had their part  
Of sorrow: for when time was ripe,  
The still affection of the heart  
Became an outward breathing type,  
That into stillness past again,  
And left a want unknown before;  
Although the loss has brought us pain,  
That loss but made us love the more, 230

With farther lookings on. The kiss,  
The woven arms, seem but to be  
Weak symbols of the settled bliss,  
The comfort, I have found in thee:  
But that God bless thee, dear—who wrought  
Two spirits to one equal mind—  
With blessings beyond hope or thought,  
With blessings which no words can find. 238

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Arise, and let us wander forth,  
To yon old mill across the wolds;  
For look, the sunset, south and north,  
Winds all the vale in rosy folds,  
And fires your narrow casement glass,  
Touching the sullen pool below;  
On the chalk-hill the bearded grass  
Is dry and dewless. Let us go.

246

1832. 1842.

*Lord Tennyson.*

## THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

INSCRIBED TO R. AIKEN, ESQ.

"Let not ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;  
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,  
The short but simple annals of the poor."—GRAY.

My loved, my honored, much-respected friend,  
No mercenary bard his homage pays:  
With honest pride I scorn each selfish end;  
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise.  
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,  
The lowly train in life's sequestered scene;  
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;  
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;  
Ah! though his worth unknown, far happier there,  
I ween.

9

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;  
The shortening winter-day is near a close;

## The Cotter's Saturday Night

The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;  
The blackening trains o' crows to their repose:  
The toilworn cotter frae his labor goes,—  
    This night his weekly moil is at an end,—  
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,  
    Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,  
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hame-  
    ward bend. 18

At length his lonely cot appears in view,  
    Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;  
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin', stacher  
    through  
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise and  
    glee.  
His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily,  
    His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's  
    smile,  
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,  
    Does a' his weary kiaugh and cares beguile,  
And makes him quite forget his labor and his  
    toil. 27

Belyve the elder bairns come drapping in,  
    At service out amang the farmers roun';  
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie  
    rin  
    A cannie errand to a neebor town;  
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,  
    In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Comes hame ; perhaps, to shew a braw new  
gown,  
Or deposit her sair-won penny-fee,  
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be. 36

With joy unfeigned brothers and sisters meet,  
And each for other's welfare kindly spiers :  
The social hours, swift-winged, unnoticed fleet ;  
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears.  
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years ;  
Anticipation forward points the view ;  
The mother, wi' her needle and her shears,  
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel 's the new ;  
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due. 45

Their master's and their mistress's command,  
The younkers a' are warnèd to obey ;  
And mind their labors wi' an eydent hand,  
And ne'er, though out o' sight, to jauk or play :  
" And O, be sure to fear the Lord alway !  
An' mind your duty, duly, morn and night !  
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,  
Implore his counsel and assisting might ;  
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord  
aright ! " 54

But, hark ! a rap comes gently to the door.  
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,  
Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor,  
To do some errands and convoy her hame.  
The wily mother sees the conscious flame  
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek ;

## The Cotter's Saturday Night

With heart-struck anxious care enquires his  
name,

While Jenny haflins is afraid to speak;  
Weel pleased the mother hears it's nae wild,  
worthless rake.

63

With kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;  
A strappin' youth; he takts the mother's eye;  
Blithe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;  
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.  
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,  
But blate and laithefu', scarce can weel be-  
have;

The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy  
What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae  
grave;  
Weel pleased to think her bairn's respected like  
the lave.

72

O happy love! where love like this is found!  
O heartfelt raptures! bliss beyond compare!  
I've pacèd much this weary mortal round,  
And sage experience bids me this declare:—  
"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,  
One cordial in this melancholy vale,  
'T is when a youthful, loving, modest pair  
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,  
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the  
evening gale."

81

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,  
A wretch, a villain, lost to love and truth,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,  
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?  
Curse on his perjured arts! dissembling,  
smooth!

Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exiled?  
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,  
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child,  
Then paints the ruined maid, and their distraction  
wild? 90

But now the supper crowns their simple board,  
The healsome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food;  
The soupe their only hawkie does afford,  
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood;  
The dame brings forth, in complimentary mood,  
To grace the lad, her weel-hained kebbuck,  
fell;  
And aft he 's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;  
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,  
How 't was a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the  
bell. 99

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,  
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;  
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,  
The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride.  
His bonnet reverently is laid aside,  
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare:  
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,  
He wales a portion with judicious care;  
And "Let us worship God!" he says with solemn  
air. 108

## The Cotter's Saturday Night

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;  
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest  
aim:  
Perhaps "Dundee's" wild-warbling measures  
rise,  
Or plaintive "Martyrs," worthy of the name;  
Or noble "Elgin" beets the heavenward flame,  
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:  
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame;  
The tickled ears no heartfelt raptures raise;  
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise. <sup>117</sup>

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,—  
How Abram was the friend of God on high;  
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage  
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;  
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie  
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;  
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;  
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;  
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre. <sup>126</sup>

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,—  
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;  
How He, who bore in heaven the second name,  
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head:  
How his first followers and servants sped;  
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:  
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,  
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,  
And heard great Bab'lom's doom pronounced by  
Heaven's command. <sup>135</sup>

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Then, kneeling down, to heaven's eternal King,  
The saint, the father, and the husband prays :  
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"  
That thus they all shall meet in future days ;  
There ever bask in uncreated rays,  
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,  
Together hymning their Creator's praise,  
In such society, yet still more dear ;  
While circling Time moves round in an eternal  
sphere. 144

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,  
In all the pomp of method and of art,  
When men display to congregations wide,  
Devotion's every grace, except the heart !  
The Power, incensed, the pageant will desert,  
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole ;  
But, haply, in some cottage far apart,  
May hear, well pleased, the language of the  
soul ;  
And in His Book of Life the inmates poor en-  
roll. 153

Then homeward all take off their several way ;  
The youngling cottagers retire to rest :  
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,  
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,  
That He who stills the raven's clamorous nest,  
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,  
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,  
For them and for their little ones provide ;  
But, chiefly, in their hearts with Grace Divine  
preside. 162

## The Cotter's Saturday Night

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur  
springs,  
That makes her loved at home, revered  
abroad;  
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,  
"An honest man's the noblest work of God!"  
And certes, in fair Virtue's heavenly road,  
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;  
What is a lordling's pomp?—a cumbrous load,  
Disguising oft the wretch of humankind,  
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined! <sup>171</sup>

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!  
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is  
sent,  
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil  
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet  
content!  
And, O, may Heaven their simple lives prevent  
From Luxury's contagion, weak and vile!  
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,  
A virtuous populace may rise the while,  
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved  
isle. <sup>180</sup>

O Thou! who poured the patriotic tide,  
That streamed through Wallace's undaunted  
heart;  
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,  
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,  
(The patriot's God peculiarly thou art,  
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

O never, never Scotia's realm desert;

But still the patriot and the patriot bard  
In bright succession raise, her ornament and  
guard!

189

1786.

*Robert Burns.*

## RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE

THERE was a roaring in the wind all night;  
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;  
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;  
The birds are singing in the distant woods;  
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove  
broods;

The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;  
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of  
waters.

7

All things that love the sun are out of doors;  
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;  
The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the  
moors

The hare is running races in her mirth;  
And with her feet she from the plashy earth  
Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,  
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth  
run.

14

I was a Traveller then upon the moor,  
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;  
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;  
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:

## Resolution and Independence

The pleasant season did my heart employ :  
My old remembrances went from me wholly ;  
And all the ways of men, so vain and melan-  
choly. 21

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might  
Of joy in minds that can no further go,  
As high as we have mounted in delight  
In our dejection do we sink as low ;  
To me that morning did it happen so ;  
And fears and fancies thick upon me came ;  
Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not,  
nor could name. 28

I heard the skylark warbling in the sky ;  
And I bethought me of the playful hare :  
Even such a happy Child of earth am I ;  
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare ;  
Far from the world I walk, and from all care ;  
But there may come another day to me—  
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty. 35

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,  
As if life's business were a summer mood ;  
As if all needful things would come unsought  
To genial faith, still rich in genial good ;  
But how can He expect that others should  
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call  
Love him, who for himself will take no heed  
at all ? 42

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,  
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;  
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy  
Following his plough, along the mountain-side:  
By our own spirits are we deified:  
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;  
But thereof come in the end despondency and  
madness.

49

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,  
A leading from above, a something given,  
Yet it befell, that, in this lonely place,  
When I with these untoward thoughts had  
striven,

Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven  
I saw a Man before me unawares:  
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore gray  
hairs.

56

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie  
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;  
Wonder to all who do the same espy,  
By what means it could thither come, and  
whence;  
So that it seems a thing endued with sense:  
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf  
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself;

63

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,  
Nor all asleep, in his extreme old age:  
His body was bent double, feet and head  
Coming together in life's pilgrimage;

50

## Resolution and Independence

As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage  
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,  
A more than human weight upon his frame had  
cast. . . . . 70

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,  
Upon a long gray staff of shaven wood:  
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,  
Upon the margin of that moorish flood  
Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,  
That heareth not the loud winds when they call  
And moveth all together, if it move at all. 77

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond  
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look  
Upon the muddy water, which he conned,  
As if he had been reading in a book:  
And now a stranger's privilege I took;  
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,  
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious  
day." 84

A gentle answer did the old Man make,  
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew:  
And him with further words I thus bespake,  
"What occupation do you there pursue?  
This is a lonesome place for one like you."  
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise  
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid  
eyes, 91

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,  
But each in solemn order followed each,  
With something of a lofty utterance drest—  
Choice word and measured phrase, above the  
reach

Of ordinary men; a stately speech;  
Such as grave Livers do in Scotland use,  
Religious men, who give to God and man their  
dues. 98

He told, that to these waters he had come  
To gather leeches, being old and poor:  
Employment hazardous and wearisome!  
And he had many hardships to endure:  
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to  
moor;  
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or  
chance,  
And in this way he gained an honest mainte-  
nance. 105

The old Man still stood talking by my side;  
But now his voice to me was like a stream  
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I  
divide;  
And the whole body of the Man did seem  
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;  
Or like a man from some far region sent,  
To give me human strength, by apt admonish-  
ment. 112

## Resolution and Independence

My former thoughts returned: the fear that  
kills;  
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;  
Cold, pain, and labor, and all fleshly ills;  
And mighty Poets in their misery dead.  
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,  
My question eagerly did I renew,  
“How is it that you live, and what is it you  
do?”

119

He with a smile did then his words repeat;  
And said, that, gathering leeches, far and wide  
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet  
The waters of the pools where they abide.  
“Once I could meet with them on every side;  
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;  
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I  
may.”

126

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,  
The old Man’s shape, and speech—all troubled  
me:

In my mind’s eye I seemed to see him pace  
About the weary moors continually,  
Wandering about alone and silently.  
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,  
He, having made a pause, the same discourse  
renewed.

133

And soon with this he other matter blended,  
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanor kind,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

But stately in the main; and when he ended,  
I could have laughed myself to scorn, to find  
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.

“God,” said I, “be my help and stay secure;  
I’ll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely  
moor!”

1802. 1807. William Wordsworth.

140

## THE SENSITIVE PLANT

### PART I

A SENSITIVE Plant in a garden grew,  
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,  
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,  
And closed them beneath the kisses of night. 4

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,  
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere;  
And each flower and herb on Earth’s dark  
breast  
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest. 8

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss  
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,  
Like a doe in the noontide with love’s sweet  
want,  
As the companionless Sensitive Plant. 12

The snowdrop, and then the violet,  
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,

## The Sensitive Plant

And their breath was mixed with fresh odor,  
sent

From the turf, like the voice and the instrument. 16

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,  
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,  
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,  
Till they die of their own dear loveliness; 20

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,  
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,  
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen  
Through their pavilions of tender green; 24

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,  
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew  
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,  
It was felt like an odor within the sense; 28

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addrest,  
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,  
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air  
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare: 32

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,  
As a Mænad, its moonlight-colored cup,  
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,  
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky; 36

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,  
The sweetest flower for scent that blows;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And all rare blossoms from every clime  
Grew in that garden in perfect prime. 40

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom  
Was prankt under boughs of embowering  
blossom,

With golden and green light, slanting through  
Their heaven of many a tangled hue, 44

Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,  
And starry river-buds glimmered by,  
And around them the soft stream did glide  
and dance

With a motion of sweet sound and radiance. 48

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,  
Which led through the garden, along and across,  
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,  
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees, 52

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells  
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,  
And flowrets which drooping as day drooped too  
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,  
To roof the glow-worm from the evening  
dew. 57

And from this undefiled Paradise  
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes  
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet  
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it), 61

## The Sensitive Plant

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,  
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,  
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one  
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun; 65

For each one was interpenetrated  
With the light and the odor its neighbor shed,  
Like young lovers whom youth and love make  
dear

Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmos-  
phere. 69

But the Sensitive Plant, which could give small  
fruit  
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the  
root,  
Received more than all, it loved more than ever,  
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the  
giver, 73

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower;  
Radiance and odor are not its dower;  
It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,  
It desires what it has not, the beautiful! 77

The light winds which, from unsustaining wings,  
Shed the music of many murmurings;  
The beams which dart from many a star  
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar; 81

The plumèd insects swift and free,  
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Laden with light and odor, which pass

Over the gleam of the living grass;

85

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie  
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,  
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,  
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears; 89

The quivering vapors of dim noontide,  
Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,  
In which every sound, and odor, and beam,  
Move, as reeds in a single stream;

93

Each and all like ministering angels were  
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear,  
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by  
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky. 97

And when evening descended from heaven  
above,  
And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all  
love,  
And delight, tho' less bright, was far more deep,  
And the day's veil fell from the world of  
sleep, 101

And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects  
were drowned  
In an ocean of dreams without a sound;  
Whose waves never mark, tho' they ever im-  
press  
The light sand which paves it, consciousness; 105

## The Sensitive Plant

(Only overhead the sweet nightingale  
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,  
And snatches of its Elysian chant  
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive  
Plant). 109

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest  
Up-gathered into the bosom of rest;  
A sweet child weary of its delight,  
The feeblest and yet the favorite,  
Cradled within the embrace of night. 114

## PART II

There was a Power in this sweet place,  
An Eve in this Eden; a ruling grace  
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,  
Was as God is to the starry scheme. 118

'A Lady, the wonder of her kind,  
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind  
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and  
motion  
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the  
ocean, 122

Tended the garden from morn to even:  
And the meteors of that sublunar heaven,  
Like the lamps of the air when night walks  
forth,  
Laughed round her footsteps up from the  
Earth! 126

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

She had no companion of mortal race,  
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face  
Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her  
eyes,  
That her dreams were less slumber than Para-  
dise : 12

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake  
Had deserted heaven while the stars were  
awake,

As if yet around her he lingering were,  
Tho' the veil of daylight concealed him from  
her. 13

Her step seemed to pity the grass it pressed ;  
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,  
That the coming and going of the wind  
Brought pleasure there and left passion  
behind. 14

And wherever her airy footstep trod,  
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod  
Eras'd its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,  
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep. 15

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet  
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet ;  
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came  
From her glowing fingers thro' all their  
frame. 16



VI

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY



## The Sensitive Plant

She sprinkled bright water from the stream  
On those that were faint with the sunny beam;  
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers  
She emptied the rain of the thunder showers. 150

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,  
And sustained them with rods and osier bands;  
If the flowers had been her own infants she  
Could never have nursed them more  
tenderly. 154

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,  
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,  
She bore in a basket of Indian woof,  
Into the rough woods far aloof, 158

In a basket, of grasses and wild-flowers full,  
The freshest her gentle hands could pull  
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,  
Although they did ill, was innocent. 162

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris  
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths  
that kiss  
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not,  
did she  
Make her attendant angels be. 166

And many an antenatal tomb,  
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,  
She left clinging round the smooth and dark  
Edge of the odorous cedar bark. 170

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

This fairest creature from earliest spring  
Thus moved through the garden ministering  
All the sweet season of summer tide,  
And ere the first leaf looked brown—she  
died !

174

### PART III

Three days the flowers of the garden fair,  
Like stars when the moon is awakened, were,  
Or the waves of Baiæ, ere luminous  
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius. 178

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant  
Felt the sound of the funeral chant,  
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,  
And the sobs of the mourners deep and low; 182

The weary sound and the heavy breath,  
And the silent motions of passing death,  
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,  
Sent through the pores of the coffin plank; 186

The dark grass, and the flowers among the  
grass,  
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass;  
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful  
tone,  
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for  
groan.

190

## The Sensitive Plant

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,  
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,  
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,  
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap  
To make men tremble who never weep.

195

Swift summer into the autumn flowed,  
And frost in the mist of the morning rode,  
Though the noonday sun looked clear and  
bright,  
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

199

The rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,  
Paved the turf and' the moss below.  
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,  
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

203

And Indian plants, of scent and hue  
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,  
Leaf by leaf, day after day,  
Were massed into the common clay.

207

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and gray, and  
red,  
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,  
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind past;  
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

211

And the gusty winds waked the wingèd seeds,  
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,  
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's  
stem,  
Which rotted into the earth with them.

215

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The water-blooms under the rivulet  
Fell from the stalks on which they were set;  
And the eddies drove them here and there,  
As the winds did those of the upper air. 219

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks  
Were bent and tangled across the walks;  
And the leafless network of parasite bowers  
Massed into ruin; and all sweet flowers. 223

Between the time of the wind and the snow,  
All loathliest weeds began to grow,  
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many  
a speck,

Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's  
back. 227

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,  
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,  
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,  
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank. 231

And plants, at whose names the verse feels  
loath,  
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,  
Prickly, and pulpos, and blistering, and blue,  
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew. 235

And agarics, and fungi, with mildew and  
mould  
Started like mist from the wet ground cold;  
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead  
With a spirit of growth had been animated! 239

## The Sensitive Plant

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,  
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,  
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes  
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water  
snakes.

243

And hour by hour, when the air was still,  
The vapors arose which have strength to kill:  
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,  
At night they were darkness no star could  
melt.

247

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray  
Crept and flitted in broad noonday  
Unseen; every branch on which they alit  
By a venomous blight was burned and bit. 251

The Sensitive Plant like one forbid  
Wept, and the tears within each lid  
Of its folded leaves which together grew  
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue. 255

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon  
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn;  
The sap shrank to the root through every pore  
As blood to a heart that will beat no more. 259

For Winter came: the wind was his whip:  
One choppy finger was on his lip:  
He had torn the cataracts from the hills  
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles; 263

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

His breath was a chain which without a sound  
The earth, and the air, and the water bound;  
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne  
By the tenfold blasts of the arctic zone. 267

Then the weeds which were forms of living  
death

Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.  
Their decay and sudden flight from frost  
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost! 271

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant  
The moles and the dormice died for want:  
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air  
And were caught in the branches naked and  
bare. 275

First there came down a thawing rain  
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again,  
Then there steamed up a freezing dew  
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew; 279

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about  
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,  
Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy and  
stiff,  
And snapped them off with his rigid griff. 283

When winter had gone and spring came back  
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck;

## The Sensitive Plant

But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks,  
and darnels,  
Rose like the dead from their ruined  
charnels.

287

## CONCLUSION

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that  
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat  
Ere its outward form had known decay,  
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

291

Whether that lady's gentle mind,  
No longer with the form combined  
Which scattered love, as stars do light,  
Found sadness, where it left delight,

295

I dare not guess; but in this life  
Of error, ignorance, and strife,  
Where nothing is, but all things seem,  
And we the shadows of the dream,

299

It is a modest creed, and yet  
Pleasant if one considers it,  
To own that death itself must be,  
Like all the rest, a mockery.

303

That garden sweet, that lady fair,  
And all sweet shapes and odors there,  
In truth have never passed away:  
'T is we, 't is ours, are changed; not they.

307

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

For love, and beauty, and delight,  
There is no death nor change: their might  
Exceeds our organs, which endure  
No light, being themselves obscure.

311

1820.

*Percy Bysshe Shelley.*

## THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

ST. AGNES' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!  
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;  
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen  
grass,

And silent was the flock in woolly fold:  
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he  
told

His rosary, and while his frosted breath,  
Like pious incense from a censer old,  
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,  
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his  
prayer he saith.

9

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;  
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,  
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,  
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:  
The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to  
freeze,  
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:  
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,

## The Eve of St. Agnes

He passeth by ; and his weak spirit fails  
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and  
mails. 18

Northward he turneth through a little door,  
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden  
tongue

Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor ;  
But no—already hath his death-bell rung ;  
The joys of all his life were said and sung :  
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve :  
Another way he went, and soon among  
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,  
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to  
grieve. 27

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft ;  
And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,  
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,  
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide :  
The level chambers, ready with their pride,  
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests :  
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,  
Star'd where upon their heads the cornice rests,  
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-  
wise on their breasts. 36

At length burst in the argent revelry,  
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,  
Numerous as shadows haunting fairly  
The brain, new-stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs  
gay

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Of old romance. These let us wish away,  
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,  
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,  
On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,  
As she had heard old dames full many times  
declare.

45

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,  
Young virgins might have visions of delight,  
And soft adorings from their loves receive  
Upon the honey'd middle of the night  
If ceremonies due they did aright;  
As, supperless to bed they must retire,  
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;  
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require  
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they  
desire.

54

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline;  
The music, yearning like a God in pain,  
She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,  
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train  
Pass by—she heeded not at all: in vain  
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,  
And back retir'd; not cool'd by high disdain,  
But she saw not: her heart was elsewhere;  
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of  
the year.

63

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes,  
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:  
The hallow'd hour was near at hand: she sighs  
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort

## The Eve of St. Agnes

Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;  
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,  
Hoodwink'd with faery fancy; all amort,  
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,  
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow  
morn.

7-

So, purposing each moment to retire,  
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,  
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire  
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,  
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and im-  
plores

All saints to give him sight of Madeline,  
But for one moment in the tedious hours,  
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;  
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth  
such things have been.

81

He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell:  
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords  
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:  
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,  
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,  
Whose very dogs would execrations howl  
Against his lineage: not one breast affords  
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,  
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in  
soul.

90

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,  
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,  
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond  
The sound of merriment and chorus bland:  
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,  
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,  
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this  
place;

They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

99

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;

He had a fever late, and in the fit  
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:  
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit  
More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!  
Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip dear,  
We're safe enough; here in this armchair sit,  
And tell me how"—"Good Saints! not here,  
not here;

Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

108

He follow'd through a lowly archèd way,  
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume;  
And as she mutter'd "Well-a—well-a-day!"

He found him in a little moonlight room,  
Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.

"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,

"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom  
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,  
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving  
piously."

117

## The Eve of St. Agnes

“St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes’ Eve—  
Yet men will murder upon holy days:  
Thou must hold water in a witch’s sieve,  
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,  
To venture so: it fills me with amaze  
To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes’ Eve!  
God’s help! my lady fair the conjurer plays  
This very night; good angels her deceive!  
But let me laugh awhile, I’ve mickle time to  
grieve.” 126

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,  
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,  
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone  
Who keepeth clos’d a wond’rous riddle-book,  
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.  
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told  
His lady’s purpose; and he scarce could brook  
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments  
    cold,  
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old. 135

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,  
Flushing his brow, and in his painèd heart  
Made purple riot: then doth he propose  
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:  
“A cruel man and impious thou art:  
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream  
Alone with her good angels, far apart  
From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem  
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou  
didst seem.” 144

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"  
Quoth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace  
When my weak voice shall whisper its last  
prayer,

If one of her soft ringlets I displace,  
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:  
Good Angela, believe me by these tears;  
Or I will, even in a moment's space,  
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,  
And beard them, though they be more fang'd  
than wolves and bears."

153

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?  
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken churchyard thing,  
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;  
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,  
Were never miss'd." Thus plaining, doth she  
bring

A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;  
So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,  
That Angela gives promise she will do  
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or  
woe.

162

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,  
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide  
Him in a closet, of such privacy  
That he might see her beauty unespied,  
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,  
While legion'd fairies pac'd the coverlet,  
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.

## The Eve of St. Agnes

Never on such a night have lovers met,  
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous  
debt. 171

“It shall be as thou wishest,” said the Dame:  
“All cates and dainties shall be storèd there  
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour-  
frame

Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,  
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare  
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.  
Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in  
prayer

The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,  
Or may I never leave my grave among the  
dead.” 180

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.  
The lover’s endless minutes slowly pass’d;  
The dame return’d, and whisper’d in his ear  
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast  
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,  
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain  
The maiden’s chamber, silken, hush’d, and  
chaste;

Where Porphyro took covert, pleas’d amain.  
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her  
brain. 189

Her falt’ring hand upon the balustrade,  
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,  
Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware:  
With silver taper's light, and pious care,  
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led  
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,  
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;  
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove  
fray'd and fled.

198

Out went the taper as she hurried in;  
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:  
She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin  
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:  
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!  
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,  
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;  
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell  
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her  
dell.

207

A casement high and triple arch'd there was,  
All garlanded with carven imag'ries  
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-  
grass,  
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,  
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,  
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;  
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,  
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,  
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of  
queens and kings.

216

## The Eve of St. Agnes.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,  
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair  
breast,  
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;  
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,  
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,  
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:  
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,  
Save wings, for heaven: Porphyro grew faint:  
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal  
taint.

225

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,  
Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees;  
Unclasps her warmèd jewels one by one;  
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees  
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees;  
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in seaweed,  
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,  
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,  
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is  
fled.

234

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,  
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay.  
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd  
Her soothèd limbs, and soul fatigued away;  
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;  
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;  
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,  
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud  
again.

243

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,  
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,  
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced  
To wake into a slumberous tenderness ;  
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,  
And breath'd himself : then from the closet  
crept,

Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,  
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stepped,  
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo !—  
how fast she slept.

252

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon  
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set  
A table, and, half-anguish'd, threw thereon  
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet :—  
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet !  
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,  
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,  
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone :—  
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is  
gone.

261

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,  
In blanchèd linen, smooth, and lavender'd,  
While he from forth the closet brought a heap  
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd ;  
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,

## The Eve of St. Agnes

And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;  
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd  
From Fez; and spicèd dainties, every one,  
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon. 270

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand  
On golden dishes and in baskets bright  
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand  
In the retired quiet of the night,  
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—  
“And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!  
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:  
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,  
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth  
ache.” 279

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm  
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream  
By the dusk curtains:—t was a midnight  
charm

Impossible to melt as icèd stream:  
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam:  
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:  
It seem'd he never, never could redeem  
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes;  
So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofèd phan-288  
tasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—  
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,  
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,  
In Provence call'd, “La belle dame sans  
mercy:”

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Close to her ear touching the melody;—  
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:  
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly  
Her blue affrayèd eyes wide open shone:  
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculp-  
tured stone.

297

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,  
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:  
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd  
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep;  
At which fair Madeline began to weep,  
And moan forth witless words with many a  
sigh;

While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;  
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,  
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dream-  
ingly.

306

“Ah, Porphyro!” said she, “but even now  
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,  
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;  
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear;  
How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and  
drear!

Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,  
Those looks immortal, those complainings  
dear!

Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,  
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where  
to go.”

315

## The Eve of St. Agnes

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far  
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,  
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star  
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose ;  
Into her dream he melted, as the rose  
Blendeth its odor with the violet,—  
Solution sweet: meantime the frost wind blows  
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet  
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon  
hath set.

324

'T is dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet:  
"This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!"  
'T is dark: the icèd gusts still rave and beat:  
"No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!  
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—  
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?  
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,  
Though thou forsakest a deceivèd thing;—  
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unprunèd  
wing."

333

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!  
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?  
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil  
dyed?  
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest  
After so many hours of toil and quest,  
A famish'd pilgrim,— saved by miracle.  
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest  
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well  
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel. 342

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

"Hark! 't is an elfin-storm from faery land,  
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:  
Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;—  
The bloated wassaillers will never heed:—  
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;  
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—  
Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:  
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,  
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for  
thee."

351

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,  
For there were sleeping dragons all around,  
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—  
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they  
found.—

In all the house was heard no human sound.  
A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each  
door;  
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and  
hound,  
Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar;  
And the long carpets rose along the gusty  
floor.

360

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;  
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;  
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,  
With a huge empty flagon by his side:  
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his  
hide,

## The Lake of the Dismal Swamp

But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:  
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—  
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—  
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges  
groans. 369

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago  
These lovers fled away into the storm.  
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,  
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form  
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,  
Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old  
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform;  
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,  
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes  
cold. 378

1820.

*John Keats.*

## THE LAKE OF THE DISMAL SWAMP

“THEY made her grave too cold and damp  
For a soul so warm and true;  
And she’s gone to the Lake of the Dismal  
Swamp,  
Where all night long, by a firefly lamp,  
She paddles her white canoe. 5

“And her firefly lamp I soon shall see,  
And her paddle I soon shall hear;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Long and loving our life shall be,  
And I'll hide the maid in a cypress-tree  
When the footstep of death is near!" 10

Away to the Dismal Swamp he speeds,—  
His path was rugged and sore,  
Through tangled juniper, beds of reeds,  
Through many a fen, where the serpent  
feeds,  
And man never trod before! 15

And when on earth he sunk to sleep,  
If slumber his eyelids knew,  
He lay where the deadly vine doth weep  
Its venomous tear, and nightly steep  
The flesh with blistering dew! 20

And near him the she-wolf stirred the brake,  
And the copper-snake breathed in his ear,  
Till he starting cried, from his dream awake,  
"O when shall I see the dusky Lake,  
And the white canoe of my dear?" 25

He saw the Lake, and a meteor bright  
Quick over its surface played,—  
"Welcome," he said, "my dear one's light!"  
And the dim shore echoed for many a night  
The name of the death-cold maid! 30

Till he hollowed a boat of the birchen bark,  
Which carried him off from the shore;  
Far he followed the meteor spark,  
The wind was high and the clouds were dark,  
And the boat returned no more. 35

## The Lake of the Dismal Swamp

But oft, from the Indian hunter's camp,  
This lover and maid so true  
Are seen, at the hour of midnight damp,  
To cross the Lake by a firefly lamp,  
And paddle their white canoe!

40

1806.

*Thomas Moore.*



## ALLEGORIES AND LEGENDS



## THE BUILDING OF THE SHIP

“BUILD me straight, O worthy Master !  
Stanch and strong, a goodly vessel,  
That shall laugh at all disaster,  
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle !”

The merchant’s word  
Delighted the Master heard ;  
For his heart was in his work, and the heart  
Giveth grace unto every Art.

A quiet smile played round his lips,  
As the eddies and dimples of the tide      10  
Play round the bows of ships,  
That steadily at anchor ride.  
And with a voice that was full of glee,  
He answered, “Erelong we will launch  
A vessel as goodly, and strong, and stanch,  
As ever weathered a wintry sea !”  
And first with nicest skill and art,  
Perfect and finished in every part,  
A little model the Master wrought,  
Which should be to the larger plan      20  
What the child is to the man,  
Its counterpart in miniature ;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

That with a hand more swift and sure  
The greater labor might be brought  
To answer to his inward thought.  
And as he labored, his mind ran o'er  
The various ships that were built of yore,  
And above them all, and strangest of all,  
Towered the Great Harry, crank and tall,  
Whose picture was hanging on the wall, 30  
With bows and stern raised high in air,  
And balconies hanging here and there,  
And signal lanterns and flags afloat,  
And eight round towers, like those that frown  
From some old castle, looking down  
Upon the drawbridge and the moat.  
And he said with a smile, "Our ship, I wis,  
Shall be of another form than this!"

It was of another form, indeed ;  
Built for freight, and yet for speed, 40  
A beautiful and gallant craft ;  
Broad in the beam, that the stress of the blast,  
Pressing down upon sail and mast,  
Might not the sharp bows overwhelm ;  
Broad in the beam, but sloping aft  
With graceful curve and slow degrees,  
That she might be docile to the helm,  
And that the currents of parted seas,  
Closing behind, with mighty force,  
Might aid and not impede her course. 50

In the ship-yard stood the Master,  
With the model of the vessel,

## The Building of the Ship

That should laugh at all disaster,  
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!

Covering many a rood of ground,  
Lay the timber piled around;  
Timber of chestnut, and elm, and oak,  
And scattered here and there, with these,  
The knarred and crooked cedar knees;  
Brought from regions far away,      60  
From Pascagoula's sunny bay,  
And the banks of the roaring Roanoke!  
Ah! what a wondrous thing it is  
To note how many wheels of toil  
One thought, one word, can set in motion!  
There's not a ship that sails the ocean,  
But every climate, every soil,  
Must bring its tribute, great or small,  
And help to build the wooden wall!

The sun was rising o'er the sea,      70  
And long the level shadows lay,  
As if they, too, the beams would be  
Of some great, airy argosy,  
Framed and launched in a single day.  
That silent architect, the sun,  
Had hewn and laid them every one,  
Ere the work of man was yet begun.  
Beside the Master, when he spoke,  
A youth, against an anchor leaning,  
Listened, to catch his slightest meaning.      80  
Only the long waves, as they broke

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

In ripples on the pebbly beach,  
Interrupted the old man's speech.

Beautiful they were, in sooth,  
The old man and the fiery youth!  
The old man, in whose busy brain  
Many a ship that sailed the main  
Was modelled o'er and o'er again;—  
The fiery youth, who was to be  
The heir of his dexterity,  
The heir of his house, and his daughter's  
hand,  
When he had built and launched from land  
What the elder head had planned. 9c

“Thus,” said he, “will we build this ship!  
Lay square the blocks upon the slip,  
And follow well this plan of mine.  
Choose the timbers with greatest care;  
Of all that is unsound beware;  
For only what is sound and strong  
To this vessel shall belong. 10c  
Cedar of Maine and Georgia pine  
Here together shall combine.  
A goodly frame, and a goodly fame,  
And the UNION be her name!  
For the day that gives her to the sea  
Shall give my daughter unto thee!”

The Master's word  
Enraptured the young man heard;

## The Building of the Ship

And as he turned his face aside,  
With a look of joy and a thrill of pride, 110  
Standing before ~~the barge~~ ~~the barge~~  
Her father's door,  
He saw the form of his promised bride.  
The sun shone on her golden hair,  
And her cheek was glowing fresh and fair,  
With the breath of morn and the soft sea air.  
Like a beauteous barge was she,  
Still at rest on the sandy beach,  
Just beyond the billow's reach;  
But he ~~the barge~~ ~~the barge~~ ~~the barge~~ ~~the barge~~ 120  
Was the restless, seething, stormy sea!

Ah, how skilful grows the hand  
That obeyeth Love's command!  
It is the heart, and not the brain,  
That to the highest doth attain,  
And he who followeth Love's behest  
Far excelleth all the rest!

Thus with the rising of the sun  
Was the noble task begun,  
And soon throughout the ship-yard's  
bounds ~~the barge~~ ~~the barge~~ ~~the barge~~ 130  
Were heard the intermingled sounds  
Of axes and of mallets, plied  
With vigorous arms on every side;  
Plied so deftly and so well,  
That, ere the shadows of evening fell,  
The keel of oak for a noble ship,  
Scarfed and bolted, straight and strong,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Was lying ready, and stretched along  
The blocks, well placed upon the slip.  
Happy, thrice happy, every one  
Who sees his labor well begun,  
And not perplexed and multiplied,  
By idly waiting for time and tide!

140

And when the hot, long day was o'er,  
The young man at the Master's door  
Sat with the maiden calm and still.  
And within the porch, a little more  
Removed beyond the evening chill,  
The father sat, and told them tales  
Of wrecks in the great September gales, 150  
Of pirates coasting the Spanish Main,  
And ships that never came back again,  
The chance and change of a sailor's life,  
Want and plenty, rest and strife,  
His roving fancy, like the wind,  
That nothing can stay and nothing can bind,  
And the magic charm of foreign lands,  
With shadows of palms, and shining sands,  
Where the tumbling surf,  
O'er the coral reefs of Madagascar, 160  
Washes the feet of the swarthy Lascar,  
As he lies alone and asleep on the turf.  
And the trembling maiden held her breath  
At the tales of that awful, pitiless sea,  
With all its terror and mystery,  
The dim, dark sea, so like unto Death,  
That divides and yet unites mankind!  
And whenever the old man paused, a gleam

160

## The Building of the Ship

From the bowl of his pipe would awhile  
illume

The silent group in the twilight gloom, 170  
And thoughtful faces, as in a dream;  
And for a moment one might mark  
What had been hidden by the dark,  
That the head of the maiden lay at rest,  
Tenderly, on the young man's breast!

Day by day the vessel grew,  
With timbers fashioned strong and true,  
Stemson and keelson and sternson-knee,  
Till, framed with perfect symmetry,

A skeleton ship rose up to view! 180  
And around the bows and along the side  
The heavy hammers and mallets plied,  
Till after many a week, at length,  
Wonderful for form and strength,  
Sublime in its enormous bulk,  
Loomed aloft the shadowy hulk!

And around it columns of smoke, up-  
wreathing,

Rose from the boiling, bubbling, seething  
Caldron, that glowed,

And overflowed 190  
With the black tar, heated for the sheathing.

And amid the clamors  
Of clattering hammers,

He who listened heard now and then  
The song of the Master and his men:—

“Build me straight, O worthy Master,  
Stanch and strong, a goodly vessel,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

That shall laugh at all disaster,  
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!"

With oaken brace and copper band, 200

Lay the rudder on the sand,

That, like a thought, should have control

Over the movement of the whole;

And near it the anchor, whose giant hand

Would reach down and grapple with the land,

And immovable and fast

Hold the great ship against the bellowing  
blast!

And at the bows an image stood,

By a cunning artist carved in wood,

With robes of white, that far behind 210

Seemed to be fluttering in the wind.

It was not shaped in a classic mould,

Not like a Nymph or Goddess of old,

Or Naiad rising from the water,

But modelled from the Master's daughter!

On many a dreary and misty night,

'T will be seen by the rays of the signal light,

Speeding along through the rain and the dark,

Like a ghost in its snow-white sark,

The pilot of some phantom bark, 220

Guiding the vessel, in its flight,

By a path none other knows aright!

Behold, at last,

Each tall and tapering mast

Is swung into its place;

Shrouds and stays

Holding it firm and fast!

## The Building of the Ship

Long ago,  
In the deer-haunted forests of Maine,  
When upon mountain and plain 230  
Lay the snow,  
They fell,—those lordly pines !  
Those grand, majestic pines !  
'Mid shouts and cheers  
The jaded steers,  
Panting beneath the goad,  
Dragged down the weary, winding road  
Those captive kings so straight and tall,  
To be shorn of their streaming hair,  
And, naked and bare, 240  
To feel the stress and the strain  
Of the wind and the reeling main  
Whose roar  
Would remind them forevermore  
Of their native forests they should not see  
again.

And everywhere  
The slender, graceful spars  
Poise aloft in the air,  
And at the mast-head,  
White, blue, and red, 250  
A flag unrolls the stripes and stars.  
Ah ! when the wanderer, lonely, friendless,  
In foreign harbors shall behold  
That flag unrolled,  
'T will be as a friendly hand  
Stretched out from his native land,  
Filling his heart with memories sweet and  
endless !

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

All is finished! and at length  
Has come the bridal day  
Of beauty and of strength. 260

To-day the vessel shall be launched!  
With fleecy clouds the sky is blanched,  
And o'er the bay,  
Slowly, in all his splendors dight,  
The great sun rises to behold the sight.

The ocean old,  
Centuries old,  
Strong as youth, and as uncontrolled,  
Paces restless to and fro,  
Up and down the sands of gold. 270

His beating heart is not at rest;  
And far and wide,  
With ceaseless flow,  
His beard of snow  
Heaves with the heaving of his breast.  
He waits impatient for his bride.

There she stands,  
With her foot upon the sands,  
Decked with flags and streamers gay,  
In honor of her marriage day, 280  
Her snow-white signals fluttering, blending,  
Round her like a veil descending,  
Ready to be  
The bride of the gray old sea.

On the deck another bride  
Is standing by her lover's side.  
Shadows from the flags and shrouds,  
Like the shadows cast by clouds,

## The Building of the Ship

Broken by many a sunny fleck,  
Fall around them on the deck.

290

The prayer is said,  
The service read,  
The joyous bridegroom bows his head;  
And in tears the good old Master  
Shakes the brown hand of his son,  
Kisses his daughter's glowing cheek  
In silence, for he cannot speak,  
And ever faster  
Down his own the tears begin to run.

The worthy pastor— 300

The shepherd of that wandering flock,  
That has the ocean for its wold,  
That has the vessel for its fold,  
Leaping ever from rock to rock—  
Spake, with accents mild and clear,  
Words of warning, words of cheer,  
But tedious to the bridegroom's ear.

He knew the chart  
Of the sailor's heart,  
All its pleasures and its griefs, 310  
All its shallows and rocky reefs,  
All those secret currents, that flow  
With such resistless undertow,  
And lift and drift, with terrible force,  
The will from its moorings and its  
course.

Therefore he spake, and thus said he:—  
"Like unto ships far off at sea,  
Outward or homeward bound, are we.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Before, behind, and all around,  
Floats and swings the horizon's bound, 320  
Seems at its distant rim to rise  
And climb the crystal wall of the skies,  
And then again to turn and sink,  
As if we could slide from its outer brink.  
Ah! it is not the sea,  
It is not the sea that sinks and shelves,  
But ourselves  
That rock and rise  
With endless and uneasy motion,  
Now touching the very skies, 330  
Now sinking into the depths of ocean.  
Ah! if our souls but poise and swing  
Like the compass in its brazen ring,  
Ever level and ever true  
To the toil and the task we have to do,  
We shall sail securely, and safely reach  
The Fortunate Isles, on whose shining beach  
The sights we see, and the sounds we hear,  
Will be those of joy and not of fear!"

Then the Master, 340  
With a gesture of command,  
Waved his hand;  
And at the word,  
Loud and sudden there was heard,  
All around them and below,  
The sound of hammers, blow on blow,  
Knocking away the shores and spurs.  
And see! she stirs!

## The Building of the Ship

She starts,—she moves,—she seems to feel  
The thrill of life along her keel, 350  
And, spurning with her foot the ground,  
With one exulting, joyous bound,  
She leaps into the ocean's arms !

And lo! from the assembled crowd  
There rose a shout, prolonged and loud,  
That to the ocean seemed to say,  
"Take her, O bridegroom, old and gray,  
Take her to thy protecting arms,  
With all her youth and all her charms!"

How beautiful she is ! How fair  
She lies within those arms, that press  
Her form with many a soft caress  
Of tenderness and watchful care !  
Sail forth into the sea, O ship !  
Through wind and wave, right onward steer !  
The moistened eye, the trembling lip,  
Are not the signs of doubt or fear.

Sail forth into the sea of life,  
O gentle, loving, trusting wife,  
And safe from all adversity  
Upon the bosom of that sea  
Thy comings and thy goings be !  
For gentleness and love and trust  
Prevail o'er angry wave and gust ;  
And in the wreck of noble lives  
Something immortal still survives !

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!  
Sail on, O UNION, strong and great!  
Humanity with all its fears,  
With all the hopes of future years, 380  
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!  
We know what Master laid thy keel,  
What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,  
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,  
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,  
In what a forge and what a heat  
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!  
Fear not each sudden sound and shock,  
'T is of the wave and not the rock;  
'T is but the flapping of the sail, 390  
And not a rent made by the gale!  
In spite of rock and tempest's roar,  
In spite of false lights on the shore,  
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!  
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,  
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,  
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,  
Are all with thee,—are all with thee!

1849.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.*

## DARKNESS

I HAD a dream, which was not all a dream.  
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars  
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,  
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth

## Darkness

Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;  
Morn came and went—and came, and brought  
no day,

And men forgot their passions in the dread  
Of this their desolation: and all hearts  
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light;  
And they did live by watchfires—and the  
thrones,

10

The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,  
The habitations of all things which dwell,  
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,  
And men were gather'd round their blazing  
homes

To look once more into each other's face;  
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye  
Of the volcanoes, and their mountain-torch:  
A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;  
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour  
They fell and faded—and the crackling

trunks

Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.  
The brows of men by the despairing light  
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits  
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down  
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest  
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and  
smiled;

And others hurried to and fro, and fed  
Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up  
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,  
The pall of a past world; and then again  
With curses cast them down upon the dust,

30

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild  
birds shriek'd

And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,  
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes  
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd  
And twined themselves among the multitude,  
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for  
food!

And War, which for a moment was no more,  
Did glut himself again:—a meal was bought  
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart 40  
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;  
All earth was but one thought—and that was  
death

Immediate and inglorious; and the pang  
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men  
Died, and their bones were tombless as their  
flesh;

The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,  
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,  
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept  
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,  
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead 50  
Lured their lank jaws; himself sought out no  
food,

But with a piteous and perpetual moan,  
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand  
Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.  
The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two  
Of an enormous city did survive,  
And they were enemies: they met beside  
The dying embers of an altar-place

## Darkness

Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things  
For an unholy usage; they raked up, 60  
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton  
hands

The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath  
Blew for a little life, and made a flame  
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up  
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld  
Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and  
died—

Even of their mutual hideousness they died,  
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow  
Famine had written Fiend. The world was  
void,

The populous and the powerful was a lump, 70  
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless,  
A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.  
The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,  
And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;  
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,  
And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they  
dropp'd

They slept on the abyss without a surge—  
The waves were dead; the tides were in their  
grave,

The moon, their mistress, had expired before;  
The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air, 80  
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need  
Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

*Lord Byron.*

1816.

## OPPORTUNITY

THIS I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream:—  
There spread a cloud of dust along a plain;  
And underneath the cloud, or in it, raged  
A furious battle, and men yelled, and swords  
Shocked upon swords and shields. A prince's  
banner  
Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by  
foes.  
A craven hung along the battle's edge,  
And thought, "Had I a sword of keener steel—  
That blue blade that the king's son bears,—but  
this  
Blunt thing—" he snapt and flung it from his  
hand, 10  
And lowering crept away and left the field.  
Then came the king's son, wounded, sore  
bestead,  
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,  
Hilt buried in the dry and trodden sand,  
And ran and snatched it, and with battle-shout  
Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,  
And saved a great cause that heroic day.

1887.

*Edward Rowland Sill.*

## THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

### PRELUDE TO PART FIRST

OVER his keys the musing organist,  
Beginning doubtfully and far away,  
First lets his fingers wander as they list,  
And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his  
lay;  
Then, as the touch of his loved instrument  
Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws his  
theme,  
First guessed by faint auroral flushes sent  
Along the wavering vista of his dream.

---

Not only around our infancy  
Doth heaven with all its splendors lie; 10  
Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,  
We Sinais climb and know it not;

Over our manhood bend the skies;  
Against our fallen and traitor lives  
The great winds utter prophecies;  
With our faint hearts the mountain strives;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Its arms outstretched, the druid wood  
Waits with its benedicite;  
And to our age's drowsy blood  
Still shouts the inspiring sea.

20

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us;  
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,  
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives  
us,

We bargain for the graves we lie in;  
At the Devil's booth are all things sold,  
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;  
For a cap and bells our lives we pay,  
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking:  
'T is heaven alone that is given away,  
'T is only God may be had for the asking; 30  
There is no price set on the lavish summer;  
And June may be had by the poorest comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June?  
Then, if ever, come perfect days;  
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,  
And over it softly her warm ear lays:  
Whether we look, or whether we listen,  
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;  
Every clod feels a stir of might,  
An instinct within it that reaches and  
towers,  
And, groping blindly above it for light, 40  
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers;  
The flush of life may well be seen  
Thrilling back over hills and valleys;

40

## The Vision of Sir Launfal

The cowslip startles in meadows green,  
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,  
And there's never a leaf or a blade too mean  
To be some happy creature's palace;  
The little bird sits at his door in the sun,  
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves, 50  
And lets his illumined being o'errun  
With the deluge of summer it receives;  
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,  
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and  
sings;  
He sings to the wide world, and she to her  
nest,—  
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the  
best?

Now is the high-tide of the year,  
And whatever of life hath ebbed away  
Comes flooding back, with a rippy cheer,  
Into every bare inlet and creek and bay; 60  
Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,  
We are happy now because God wills it;  
No matter how barren the past may have been,  
'T is enough for us now that the leaves are  
green;  
We sit in the warm shade and feel right well  
How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell;  
We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help  
knowing  
That skies are clear and grass is growing;  
The breeze comes whispering in our ear,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

That dandelions are blossoming near, 70  
That maize has sprouted, that streams are  
flowing,  
That the river is bluer than the sky,  
That the robin is plastering his house hard by;  
And if the breeze kept the good news back,  
For other couriers we should not lack;  
We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing,—  
And hark! how clear bold chanticleer,  
Warmed with the new wine of the year,  
Tells all in his lusty crowing!

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how; 80  
Everything is happy now,  
Everything is upward striving;  
'T is as easy now for the heart to be true  
As for grass to be green, or skies to be blue,—  
'T is the natural way of living:  
Who knows whither the clouds have fled?  
In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake;  
And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,  
The heart forgets its sorrow and ache;  
The soul partakes the season's youth, 90  
And the sulphurous rifts of passion and woe  
Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,  
Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.  
What wonder if Sir Launfal now  
Remembered the keeping of his vow?

# The Vision of Sir Launfal

## PART FIRST

### I

“ My golden spurs now bring to me,  
And bring to me my richest mail,  
For to-morrow I go over land and sea  
In search of the Holy Grail;  
Shall never a bed for me be spread,  
Nor shall a pillow be under my head,  
Till I begin my vow to keep;  
Here on the rushes will I sleep,  
And perchance there may come a vision true  
Ere day create the world anew.”

100

Slowly Sir Launfal’s eyes grew dim,  
Slumber fell like a cloud on him,  
And into his soul the vision flew.

### II

The crows flapped over by twos and threes,  
In the pool drowsed the cattle up to their  
knees,

110

The little birds sang as if it were  
The one day of summer in all the year,  
And the very leaves seemed to sing on the  
trees:

The castle alone in the landscape lay  
Like an outpost of winter, dull and gray;  
'T was the proudest hall in the North Countree,

### III

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And never its gates might opened be,  
Save to lord or lady of high degree;  
Summer besieged it on every side,  
But the churlish stone her assaults defied; 120  
She could not scale the chilly wall,  
Though around it for leagues her pavilions tall  
Stretched left and right,  
Over the hills and out of sight;  
Green and broad was every tent,  
And out of each a murmur went  
Till the breeze fell off at night.

### III

The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,  
And through the dark arch a charger sprang,  
Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight, 130  
In his gilded mail, that flamed so bright  
It seemed the dark castle had gathered all  
Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its  
wall

In his siege of three hundred summers long,  
And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf,  
Had cast them forth: so, young and strong,  
And lightsome as a locust-leaf,  
Sir Launfal flashed forth in his unscarred mail,  
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

### IV

It was morning on hill and stream and tree, 140  
And morning in the young knight's heart;

## The Vision of Sir Launfal

Only the castle moodily  
Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free,  
And gloomed by itself apart;  
The season brimmed all other things up  
Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's cup.

### V

As Sir Launfal made morn through the dark-  
some gate,  
He was ware of a leper, crouched by the  
same,  
Who begged with his hand and moaned as he  
sate;  
And a loathing over Sir Launfal came; 150  
The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,  
The flesh 'neath his armor did shrink and  
crawl,  
And midway its leap his heart stood still  
Like a frozen waterfall;  
For this man, so foul and bent of stature,  
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,  
And seemed the one blot on the summer  
morn,—  
So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

### VI

The leper raised not the gold from the dust:  
"Better to me the poor man's crust, 160  
Better the blessing of the poor,  
Though I turn me empty from his door;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

That is no true alms which the hand can hold;  
He gives nothing but worthless gold

Who gives from a sense of duty;  
But he who gives but a slender mite,  
And gives to that which is out of sight,

That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty  
Which runs through all and doth all unite,—  
The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms, 170  
The heart outstretches its eager palms,  
For a god goes with it and makes it store  
To the soul that was starving in darkness  
before."

### PRELUDE TO PART SECOND

Down swept the chill wind from the mountain  
peak,

From the snow five thousand summers old;  
On open wold and hill-top bleak

It had gathered all the cold,  
And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's  
cheek;

It carried a shiver everywhere  
From the unleafed boughs and pastures  
bare;

The little brook heard it and built a roof  
'Neath which he could house him, winter-proof;  
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams  
He groined his arches and matched his beams;  
Slender and clear were his crystal spars  
As the lashes of light that trim the stars:  
He sculptured every summer delight

186

## The Vision of Sir Launfal

In his halls and chambers out of sight;  
Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt  
Down through a frost-leaved forest-crypt, 190  
Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed trees  
Bending to counterfeit a breeze;  
Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew  
But silvery mosses that downward grew;  
Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief  
With quaint arabesques of ice-fern leaf;  
Sometimes it was simply smooth and clear  
For the gladness of heaven to shine through,

and here

He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops  
And hung them thickly with diamond drops, 200  
That crystallised the beams of moon and sun,  
And made a star of every one:  
No mortal builder's most rare device  
Could match this winter-palace of ice;  
'T was as if every image that mirrored lay  
In his depths serene through the summer day,  
Each fleeting shadow of earth and sky,  
Lest the happy model should be lost,  
Had been mimicked in fairy masonry  
By the elfin builders of the frost. 210

Within the hall are song and laughter,  
The cheeks of Christmas glow red and jolly,  
And sprouting is every corbel and rafter  
With lightsome green of ivy and holly;  
Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide  
Wallows the Yule-log's roaring tide;  
The broad flame-pennons droop and flap

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And belly and tug as a flag in the wind ;  
Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,  
Hunted to death in its galleries blind ; 220  
And swift little troops of silent sparks,  
Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,  
Go threading the soot-forest's tangled darks  
Like herds of startled deer.

But the wind without was eager and sharp,  
Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp,  
And rattles and wrings  
The icy strings,  
Singing, in dreary monotone,  
A Christmas carol of its own, 230  
Whose burden still, as he might guess,  
Was—"Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless!"  
The voice of the seneschal flared like a torch  
As he shouted the wanderer away from the  
porch,  
And he sat in the gateway and saw all night  
The great hall-fire so cheery and bold,  
Through the window-slits of the castle old,  
Build out its piers of ruddy light  
Against the drift of the cold.

### PART SECOND

#### I

There was never a leaf on bush or tree, 240  
The bare boughs rattled shudderingly ;

## The Vision of Sir Launfal

The river was dumb and could not speak,  
For the weaver Winter its shroud had spun;  
A single crow on the tree-top bleak  
From his shining feathers shed off the cold  
sun.  
Again it was morning, but shrunk and cold,  
As if her veins were sapless and old,  
And she rose up decrepitly  
For a last dim look at earth and sea.

### II

Sir Launfal turned from his own hard gate, 250  
For another heir in his earldom sate;  
An old, bent man, worn out and frail,  
He came back from seeking the Holy Grail;  
Little he recked of his earldom's loss,  
No more on his surcoat was blazoned the cross,  
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,  
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

### III

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spare  
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbèd air,  
For it was just at the Christmas time; 260  
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier clime,  
And sought for a shelter from cold and snow  
In the light and warmth of long ago;  
He sees the snake-like caravan crawl  
O'er the edge of the desert, black and small,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Then nearer and nearer, till, one by one,  
He can count the camels in the sun,  
As over the red-hot sands they pass  
To where, in its slender necklace of grass,  
The little spring laughed and leapt in the  
shade, 270  
And with its own self like an infant played,  
And waved its signal of palms.

### IV

“ For Christ’s sweet sake, I beg an alms ; ”—  
The happy camels may reach the spring,  
But Sir Launfal sees only the grawsome thing,  
The leper, lank as the rain-blanchèd bone,  
That cowers beside him, a thing as lone  
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas  
In the desolate horror of his disease.

### V

And Sir Launfal said,—“ I behold in thee 280  
An image of Him who died on the tree ;  
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,—  
Thou also hast had the world’s buffets and  
scorns,—  
And to thy life were not denied  
The wounds in the hands and feet and side :  
Mild Mary’s Son, acknowledge me ;  
Behold, through him, I give to thee ! ”

## The Vision of Sir Launfal

### VI

Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes  
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway  
he  
Remembered in what a haughtier guise 290  
He had flung an alms to leprosie,  
When he girt his young life up in gilded mail  
And set forth in search of the Holy Grail.  
The heart within him was ashes and dust;  
He parted in twain his single crust,  
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,  
And gave the leper to eat and drink;  
'T was a mouldy crust of coarse brown bread,  
'T was water out of a wooden bowl,—  
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper 300  
fed,  
And 't was red wine he drank with his thirsty  
soul.

### VII

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,  
A light shone round about the place;  
The leper no longer crouched at his side,  
But stood before him glorified,  
Shining and tall and fair and straight  
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate,—  
Himself the Gate whereby men can  
Enter the temple of God in Man.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

VIII

His words were shed softer than leaves from  
the pine, 310  
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the  
brine,  
Which mingle their softness and quiet in one  
With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;  
And the voice that was calmer than silence  
said.

“Lo it is I, be not afraid!  
In many climes, without avail,  
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;  
Behold, it is here,—this cup which thou  
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;  
This crust is my body broken for thee,      320  
This water His blood that died on the tree;  
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,  
In whatso we share with another’s need;  
Not what we give, but what we share,—  
For the gift without the giver is bare;  
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—  
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me.”

IX

Sir Launfal awoke as from a swound :—  
“ The Grail in my castle here is found !  
Hang my idle armor up on the wall,  
Let it be the spider’s banquet-hall ;

## Abou Ben Adhem

He must be fenced with stronger mail  
Who would seek and find the Holy Grail."

x

The castle gate stands open now,  
And the wanderer is welcome to the hall  
As the hangbird is to the elm-tree bough;  
No longer scowl the turrets tall,  
The summer's long siege at last is o'er;  
When the first poor outcast went in at the door,  
She entered with him in disguise, 340  
And mastered the fortress by surprise;  
There is no spot she loves so well on ground,  
She lingers and smiles there the whole year  
round;  
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land  
Has hall and bower at his command; 345  
And there's no poor man in the North Countree  
But is lord of the earldom as much as he.

1848. James Russell Lowell.

## ABOU BEN ADHEM

ABOU BEN ADHEM (may his tribe increase!)  
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,  
And saw within the moonlight in his room,  
Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,  
An angel writing in a book of gold:  
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And to the presence in the room he said,  
"What writest thou?" The vision raised its  
head,  
And, with a look made of all sweet accord,  
Answered, "The names of those who love the  
Lord." 10  
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"  
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,  
But cheerly still; and said, "I pray thee, then,  
Write me as one that loves his fellow-men."

The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night  
It came again, with a great wakening light,  
And showed the names whom love of God had  
blessed,—

And, lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

1844.

Leigh Hunt.

## MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

O YOUNG Mariner,  
You from the haven  
Under the sea-cliff,  
You that are watching  
The gray Magician  
With eyes of wonder,  
*I am Merlin,*  
And *I am dying,*  
*I am Merlin*  
Who follow the Gleam.

10

## Merlin and the Gleam

Mighty the Wizard  
Who found me at sunrise  
Sleeping and woke me  
And learn'd me Magic!  
Great the Master,  
And sweet the Magic,  
When over the valley,  
In early summers,  
Over the mountain,  
On human faces,  
And all around me,  
Moving to melody,  
Floated the Gleam.

23

Once at the croak of a Raven who crossed it,  
A barbarous people,  
Blind to the magic,  
And deaf to the melody,  
Snarl'd at and cursed me.  
A demon vexed me,  
The light retreated,  
The landskip darken'd,  
The melody deaden'd,  
The Master whisper'd,  
“Follow the Gleam.”

34

Then to the melody,  
Over a wilderness  
Gliding, and glancing at  
Elf of the woodland,  
Gnome of the cavern,  
Griffin and Giant,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And dancing of Fairies  
In desolate hollows,  
And wraiths of the mountain,  
And rolling of dragons  
By warble of water,  
Or cataract music  
Of falling torrents,  
Flitted the Gleam.

48

Down from the mountain  
And over the level,  
And streaming and shining on  
Silent river,  
Silvery willow,  
Pasture and plowland,  
Innocent maidens,  
Garrulous children,  
Homestead and harvest,  
Reaper and gleaner,  
And rough-ruddy faces  
Of lowly labor,  
Slided the Gleam—

6

Then, with a melody  
Stronger and statelier,  
Led me at length  
To the city and palace  
Of Arthur the King;  
Touch'd at the golden  
Cross of the churches,  
Flash'd on the Tournament,

## Merlin and the Gleam

Flicker'd and bicker'd  
From helmet to helmet,  
And last on the forehead  
Of Arthur the blameless  
Rested the Gleam.

74

Clouds and darkness  
Closed upon Camelot;  
Arthur had vanish'd  
I knew not whither,  
The king who loved me,  
And cannot die;  
For out of the darkness  
Silent and slowly

The Gleam, that had waned to a wintry  
glimmer  
On icy fallow  
And faded forest,  
Drew to the valley  
Named of the shadow,  
And slowly brightening  
Out of the glimmer,  
And slowly moving again to a melody  
Yearningly tender,  
Fell on the shadow,  
No longer a shadow,  
But clothed with the Gleam.

94

And broader and brighter  
The Gleam flying onward,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Wed to the melody,  
Sang thro' the world ;  
And slower and fainter,  
Old and weary,  
But eager to follow,  
I saw, whenever  
In passing it glanced upon  
Hamlet or city,  
That under the Crosses  
The dead man's garden,  
The mortal hillock,  
Would break into blossom ;  
And so to the land's  
Last limit I came—  
And can no longer,  
But die rejoicing,  
For thro' the Magic  
Of Him the Mighty,  
Who taught me in childhood  
There on the border  
Of boundless Ocean,  
And all but in Heaven  
Hovers the Gleam.

119

Not of the sunlight,  
Not of the moonlight,  
Not of the starlight !  
O young Mariner,  
Down to the haven,  
Call your companions,  
Launch your vessel

126

## Rhoecus

And crowd your canvas,  
And, ere it vanishes  
Over the margin,  
After it, follow it,  
Follow the Gleam.

131

1889.

*Lord Tennyson.*

## RHŒCUS

God sends his teachers unto every age,  
To every clime, and every race of men,  
With revelations fitted to their growth  
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of  
Truth  
Into the selfish rule of one sole race:  
Therefore each form of worship that hath  
swayed  
The life of man, and given it to grasp  
The master-key of knowledge, reverence,  
Enfolds some germs of goodness and of right;  
Else never had the eager soul, which loathes 10  
The slothful down of pampered ignorance,  
Found in it even a moment's fitful rest.

There is an instinct in the human heart  
Which makes that all the fables it hath coined,  
To justify the reign of its belief  
And strengthen it by beauty's right divine,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Veil in their inner cells a mystic gift,  
Which, like the hazel twig, in faithful hands,  
Points surely to the hidden springs of truth.

For, as in nature naught is made in vain, 20  
But all things have within their hull of use  
A wisdom and a meaning which may speak  
Of spiritual secrets to the ear  
Of spirit; so, in whatsoe'er the heart  
Hath fashioned for a solace to itself,  
To make its inspirations suit its creed,  
And from the niggard hands of falsehood  
wring

Its needful food of truth, there ever is  
A sympathy with Nature, which reveals,  
Not less than her own works, pure gleams of  
light 30

And earnest parables of inward lore.  
Hear now this fairy legend of old Greece,  
As full of freedom, youth, and beauty still  
As the immortal freshness of that grace  
Carved for all ages on some Attic frieze.

A youth named Rhœcüs, wandering in the  
wood, 30  
Saw an old oak just trembling to its fall,  
And, feeling pity of so fair a tree,  
He propped its gray trunk with admiring care,  
And with a thoughtless footstep loitered on. 40  
But, as he turned, he heard a voice behind  
That murmured "Rhœcüs!" 'T was as if the  
leaves,  
Stirred by a passing breath, had murmured it.

## Rhœcus

And, while he paused bewildered, yet again  
It murmured "Rhœcus!" softer than a breeze.  
He started and beheld with dizzy eyes  
What seemed the substance of a happy dream  
Stand there before him, spreading a warm glow  
Within the green glooms of the shadowy oak.  
It seemed a woman's shape, yet all too fair 50  
To be a woman, and with eyes too meek  
For any that were wont to mate with gods.  
All naked like a goddess stood she there,  
And like a goddess all too beautiful  
To feel the guilt-born earthliness of shame.  
"Rhœcus, I am the Dryad of this tree,"  
Thus she began, dropping her low-toned words  
Serene, and full, and clear, as drops of dew,  
"And with it I am doomed to live and die;  
The rain and sunshine are my caterers, 60  
Nor have I other bliss than simple life;  
Now ask me what thou wilt, that I can give,  
And with a thankful joy it shall be thine."

Then Rhœcus, with a flutter at the heart,  
Yet, by the prompting of such beauty, bold,  
Answered: "What is there that can satisfy  
The endless craving of the soul but love?  
Give me thy love, or but the hope of that  
Which must be evermore my spirit's goal."  
After a little pause she said again, 70  
But with a glimpse of sadness in her tone,  
"I give it, Rhœcus, though a perilous gift;  
An hour before the sunset meet me here."  
And straightway there was nothing he could see

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

But the green glooms beneath the shadowy oak  
And not a sound came to his straining ears  
But the low trickling rustle of the leaves,  
And far away upon an emerald slope  
The falter of an idle shepherd's pipe.

Now, in those days of simpleness and faith, 80

Men did not think that happy things were  
dreams

Because they overstepped the narrow bourne  
Of likelihood, but reverently deemed  
Nothing too wondrous or too beautiful  
To be the guerdon of a daring heart.

So Rhœucus made no doubt that he was blest,  
And all along unto the city's gate  
Earth seemed to spring beneath him as he  
walked,

The clear, broad sky looked bluer than its wont,  
And he could scarce believe he had not  
wings. 90

Such sunshine seemed to glitter through his  
veins

Instead of blood, so light he felt and strange.

Young Rhœucus had a faithful heart enough,  
But one that in the present dwelt too much  
And, taking with blithe welcome whatsoe'er  
Chance gave of joy, was wholly bound in that,  
Like the contented peasant of a vale,  
Deemed it the world, and never looked beyond.  
So, haply meeting in the afternoon

## Rhœcus

Some comrades who were playing at the  
dice,  
He joined them and forgot all else beside.

100

The dice were rattling at the merriest,  
And Rhœcus, who had met but sorry luck,  
Just laughed in triumph at a happy throw,  
When through the room there hummed a  
yellow bee

That buzzed about his ear with down-dropped  
legs

As if to light. And Rhœcus laughed and said,  
Feeling how red and flushed he was with loss,  
"By Venus! does he take me for a rose?"

And brushed him off with rough, impatient  
hand.

110

But still the bee came back, and thrice again  
Rhœcus did beat him off with growing wrath.  
Then through the window flew the wounded  
bee,

And Rhœcus, tracking him with angry eyes,  
Saw a sharp mountain-peak of Thessaly  
Against the red disk of the setting sun,—  
And instantly the blood sank from his heart,  
As if its very walls had caved away.

Without a word he turned, and, rushing forth,  
Ran madly through the city and the gate,  
And o'er the plain, which now the wood's long  
shade,

120

By the low sun thrown forward broad and dim,  
Darkened well-nigh unto the city's wall.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Quite spent and out of breath he reached the tree,  
And, listening fearfully, he heard once more  
The low voice murmur "Rhœcus!" close at hand:  
Whereat he looked around him, but could see  
Naught but the deepening glooms beneath the oak.

Then sighed the voice, "O Rhœcus! nevermore  
Shalt thou behold me or by day or night, 130  
Me, who would fain have blessed thee with a  
love

More ripe and bounteous than ever yet  
Filled up with nectar any mortal heart:  
But thou didst scorn my humble messenger,  
And sent'st him back to me with bruisèd wings.  
We spirits only show to gentle eyes.  
We ever ask an undivided love,  
And he who scorns the least of Nature's works  
Is thenceforth exiled and shut out from all.  
Farewell! for thou canst never see me  
more." 140

Then Rhœcus beat his breast, and groaned aloud,  
And cried, "Be pitiful! forgive me yet  
This once, and I shall never need it more!"  
"Alas!" the voice returned, "'t is thou art blind,  
Not I unmerciful; I can forgive,  
But have no skill to heal thy spirit's eyes;  
Only the soul hath power o'er itself."

## The Boy and the Angel

With that again there murmured "Never-more!"

And Rhœcus after heard no other sound,  
Except the rattling of the oak's crisp leaves, 150  
Like the long surf upon a distant shore,  
Raking the sea-worn pebbles up and down.  
The night had gathered round him: o'er the  
plain -

The city sparkled with its thousand lights,  
And sounds of revel fell upon his ear  
Harshly and like a curse; above, the sky,  
With all its bright sublimity of stars,  
Deepened, and on his forehead smote the breeze:  
Beauty was all around him and delight,  
But from that eve he was alone on earth. 160

1843.

*James Russell Lowell.*

## THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon and night,  
"Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,  
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he labored, long and well;  
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,  
He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Then back again his curls he threw,  
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, " Well done;  
I doubt not thou art heard, my son: " 12

" As well as if thy voice to-day  
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

" This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome  
Praises God from Peter's dome." 16

Said Theocrite, " Would God that I  
Might praise him that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone,  
And Theocrite was gone. 20

With God a day endures alway,  
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, " Nor day nor night  
Now brings the voice of my delight." 24

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,  
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,  
Lived there, and played the craftsman well; 28

And morning, evening, noon and night,  
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

## The Boy and the Angel

And from a boy, to youth he grew:  
The man put off the stripling's hue;

32

The man matured and fell away  
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,  
And ever lived on earth content.

36

(He did God's will; to him, all one  
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;  
There is no doubt in it, no fear:

40

"So sing old worlds, and so  
New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways:  
I miss my little human praise."

44

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell  
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'T was Easter Day: he flew to Rome,  
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

48

In the tiring-room close by  
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,  
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

52

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,  
Till on his life the sickness weighed; 56

And in his cell, when death drew near,  
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear,  
He grew a priest, and now stood here. 60

To the East with praise he turned,  
And on his sight the angel burned.

“I bore thee from thy craftsman’s cell,  
And set thee here; I did not well. 64

“Vainly I left my angel-sphere,  
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

“Thy voice’s praise seemed weak; it dropped—  
Creation’s chorus stopped! 68

“Go back and praise again  
The early way, while I remain.

“With that weak voice of our disdain,  
Take up creation’s pausing strain. 72

“Back to the cell and poor employ:  
Resume the craftsman and the boy!”

## Saint Brandan

Theocrite grew old at home;  
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

76

One vanished as the other died:  
They sought God side by side.

1844.

*Robert Browning.*

## SAINT BRANDAN

SAINT BRANDAN sails the northern main;  
The brotherhoods of saints are glad.  
He greets them once, he sails again;  
So late!—such storms!—The Saint is mad! 4

He heard, across the howling seas,  
Chime convent-bells on wintry nights;  
He saw, on spray-swept Hebrides,  
Twinkle the mohastery-lights.

8

But north, still north, Saint Brandan steer'd—  
And now no bells, no convents more!  
The hurtling Polar lights are near'd,  
The sea without a human shore.

12

At last—(it was the Christmas night);  
Stars shone after a day of storm)—  
He sees float past an iceberg white,  
And on it—Christ!—a living form.

16

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,  
Of hair that red and tufted fell—  
It is—Oh, where shall Brandan fly?—  
The traitor Judas, out of hell!

20

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate;  
The moon was bright, the iceberg near.  
He hears a voice sigh humbly: “Wait!  
By high permission I am here.”

24

“One moment wait, thou holy man!  
On earth my crime, my death, they knew;  
My name is under all men’s ban—  
Ah, tell them of my respite too!”

28

“Tell them, one blessed Christmas-night—  
(It was the first after I came,  
Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,  
To rue my guilt in endless flame)”—

32

“I felt, as I in torment lay  
'Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power,  
An angel touch mine arm, and say:  
*Go hence and cool thyself an hour!*”

36

“‘Ah, whence this mercy, Lord?’ I said.  
*The Leper recollect, said he,*  
*Who ask’d the passers-by for aid,*  
*In Joppa, and thy charity.*”

40

“Then I remember’d how I went,  
In Joppa, through a public street,

## Saint Brandan

One morn when the sirocco spent  
Its storms of dust with burning heat; 44

“ And in the street a leper sate,  
Shivering with fever, naked, old;  
Sand raked his sores from heel to pate,  
The hot wind fever’d him five-fold. 48

“ He gaz’d upon me as I pass’d,  
And murmur’d: *Help me, or I die!*—  
To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,  
Saw him look eased, and hurried by. 52

“ Oh, Brandan, think what grace divine,  
What blessing must full goodness shower,  
When fragment of it small, like mine,  
Hath such inestimable power! . . . . 56

“ Well-fed, well-clothed, well-friended, I  
Did that chance act of good, that one!  
Then went my way to kill and lie—  
Forgot my good as soon as done. 60

“ That germ of kindness, in the womb  
Of mercy caught, did not expire;  
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,  
And friends me in the pit of fire. 64

“ Once every year, when carols wake,  
On earth, the Christmas-night’s repose,  
Arising from the sinners’ lake,  
I journey to these healing snows. 68

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

"I stanch with ice my burning breast,  
With silence balm my whirling brain.

O Brandan! to this hour of rest  
That Joppan leper's ease was pain."— 72

Tears started to Saint Brandan's eyes;  
He bow'd his head, he breathed a prayer—  
Then look'd, and lo, the frosty skies!  
The iceberg, and no Judas there! 76

1867. Matthew Arnold.

## ARETHUSA

ARETHUSA arose  
From her couch of snows  
In the Acroceraunian mountains,—  
From cloud and from crag,  
With many a jag,  
Shepherding her bright fountains.  
She leapt down the rocks,  
With her rainbow locks  
Streaming among the streams;—  
Her steps paved with green  
The downward ravine  
Which slopes to the western gleams:  
And gliding and springing  
She went, ever singing,  
In murmurs as soft as sleep;  
The Earth seemed to love her,  
And Heaven smiled above her,  
As she lingered towards the deep.

## Arethusa

Then Alpheus bold,  
On his glacier cold,  
With his trident the mountains strook  
And opened a chasm  
In the rocks ;—with the spasm  
All Erymanthus shook.  
And the black south wind  
It concealed behind  
The urns of the silent snow,  
And earthquake and thunder  
Did rend in sunder  
The bars of the springs below.  
The beard and the hair  
Of the River-god were  
Seen through the torrent's sweep,  
As he followed the light  
Of the fleet nymph's flight  
To the brink of the Dorian deep.

36

“ Oh, save me ! Oh, guide me !  
And bid the deep hide me,  
For he grasps me now by the hair ! ”  
The loud Ocean heard,  
To its blue depth stirred,  
And divided at her prayer ;  
And under the water  
The Earth's white daughter  
Fled like a sunny beam ;  
Behind her descended  
Her billows, unblended  
With the brackish Dorian stream :—

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Like a gloomy stain  
On the emerald main  
Alpheus rushed behind,—  
As an eagle pursuing  
A dove to its ruin  
Down the streams of the cloudy wind. 54

Under the bowers  
Where the Ocean Powers  
Sit on their pearlèd thrones,  
Through the coral woods  
Of the weltering floods,  
Over heaps of unvalued stones;  
Through the dim beams  
Which amid the streams  
Weave a network of colored light;  
And under the caves,  
Where the shadowy waves  
Are as green as the forest's night;—  
Outspeeding the shark,  
And the sword-fish dark,  
Under the ocean foam,  
And up through the rifts  
Of the mountain clifts  
They passed to their Dorian home. 72

And now from their fountains  
In Enna's mountains,  
Down one vale where the morning basks,  
Like friends once parted  
Grown single-hearted,  
They ply their watery tasks.

## Laodamia

At sunrise they leap  
From their cradles steep  
In the cave of the shelving hill;  
At noontide they flow  
Through the woods below  
And the meadows of Asphodel;  
And at night they sleep  
In the rocking deep  
Beneath the Ortygian shore;—  
Like spirits that lie  
In the azure sky  
When they love but live no more.

90

1820. 1824.

*Percy Bysshe Shelley.*

## LAODAMIA

WITH sacrifice before the rising morn  
Vows have I made by fruitless hope inspired;  
And from the infernal Gods, 'mid shades for-  
lorn  
Of night, my slaughtered Lord have I required:  
Celestial pity I again implore;—  
Restore him to my sight—great Jove,  
restore!"

6

So speaking, and by fervent love endowed  
With faith, the Suppliant heavenward lifts her  
hands;  
While, like the sun emerging from a cloud,  
Her countenance brightens—and her eye ex-  
pands;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature  
grows; And she expects the issue in repose. 12

O terror! what hath she perceived?—O joy!  
What doth she look on?—whom doth she  
behold?

Her Hero slain upon the beach of Troy?  
His vital presence? his corporeal mould?  
It is—if sense deceive her not—it is He!  
And a God leads him, wingèd Mercury! 18

Mild Hermes spake—and touched her with his  
wand  
That calms all fear; “Such grace hath crowned  
thy prayèr,  
Laodamia! that at Jove’s command  
Thy Husband walks the paths of upper air:  
He comes to tarry with thee three hours’ space;  
Accept the gift, behold him face to face!” 24

Forth sprang the impassioned Queen her Lord  
to clasp;  
Again that consummation she essayed;  
But unsubstantial Form eludes her grasp  
As often as that eager grasp was made.  
The Phantom parts—but parts to re-unite,  
And re-assume his place before her sight. 30

“Protesiláus, lo! thy guide is gone!  
Confirm, I pray the vision with thy voice:

## Laodamia

This is our palace,—yonder is thy throne;  
Speak, and the floor thou tread'st on will  
    rejoice.

Not to appal me have the gods bestowed  
This precious boon; and blest a sad abode.” 36

“Great Jove, Laodamia! doth not leave  
His gifts imperfect:—Spectre though I be,  
I am not sent to scare thee or deceive;  
But in reward of thy fidelity.  
And something also did my worth obtain;  
For fearless virtue bringeth boundless gain. 42

“Thou knowest, the Delphic oracle foretold  
That the first Greek who touched the Trojan  
    strand  
Should die; but me the threat could not with-  
    hold;  
A generous cause a victim did demand;  
And forth I leapt upon the sandy plain;  
A self-devoted chief—by Hector slain.” 48

“Supreme of Heroes—bravest, noblest, best!  
Thy matchless courage I bewail no more,  
Which then, when tens of thousands were  
    deprest  
By doubt, propelled thee to the fatal shore;  
Thou found'st—and I forgive thee—here thou  
    art—  
A nobler counsellor than my poor heart. 54

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

“ But thou, though capable of sternest deed,  
Wert kind as resolute, and good as brave ;  
And he, whose power restores thee, hath decreed  
Thou should’st elude the malice of the grave :  
Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair  
As when their breath enriched Thessalian  
air. 60

“ No Spectre greets me,—no vain Shadow this ;  
Come, blooming Hero, place thee by my side !  
Give, on this well-known couch, one nuptial kiss  
To me, this day, a second time thy bride ! ”  
Jove frowned in heaven : the conscious Parcæ  
threw  
Upon those roseate lips a Stygian hue. 66

“ This visage tells thee that my doom is past :  
Nor should the change be mourned, even if  
the joys  
Of sense were able to return as fast  
And surely as they vanish. Earth destroys  
Those raptures duly—Erebus disdains :  
Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains. 72

“ Be taught, O faithful Consort, to control  
Rebellious passion : for the Gods approve  
The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul ;  
A fervent, not ungovernable, love.  
Thy transports moderate ; and meekly mourn  
When I depart, for brief is my sojourn — ” 78

## Laodamia

"Ah, wherefore?—Did not Hercules by force  
Wrest from the guardian Monster of the tomb  
Alcestis, a reanimated corse,  
Given back to dwell on earth in vernal bloom?  
Medea's spells dispersed the weight of years,  
And Æson stood a youth 'mid youthful peers. 84

“The Gods to us are merciful—and they  
Yet further may relent: for mightier far  
Than strength of nerve and sinew, or the sway  
Of magic potent over sun and star,  
Is love, though oft to agony distrest,  
And though his favorite seat be feeble woman’s  
breast.

90

"But if thou goest, I follow—" "Peace!" he said;—  
She looked upon him and was calmed and cheered;  
The ghastly color from his lips had fled;  
In his deportment, shape, and mien, appeared  
Elysian beauty, melancholy grace,  
Brought from a pensive though a happy place. 96

He spake of love, such love as Spirits feel  
In worlds whose course is equable and pure;  
No fears to beat away—no strife to heal—  
The past unsighed for, and the future sure;  
Spake of heroic arts in graver mood  
Revived, with finer harmony pursued;

103

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there  
In happier beauty; more pellucid streams,  
An ampler ether, a diviner air,  
And fields invested with purpureal gleams;  
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest  
day

Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey. 108

Yet there the Soul shall enter which hath  
earned

That privilege by virtue.—“ Ill,” said he,  
“ The end of man’s existence I discerned,  
Who from ignoble games and revelry  
Could draw, when we had parted, vain delight,  
While tears were thy best pastime, day and  
night; 114

“ And while my youthful peers before my eyes  
(Each hero following his peculiar bent)  
Prepared themselves for glorious enterprise  
By martial sports,—or, seated in the tent,  
Chieftains and kings in council were detained;  
What time the fleet at Aulis lay enchained. 120

“ The wished-for wind was given:—I then re-  
volved

The oracle, upon the silent sea;  
And, if no worthier led the way, resolved  
That, of a thousand vessels, mine should be  
The foremost prow in pressing to the strand,—  
Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan  
sand. 124

## Laodamia

132

“But should suspense permit the Foe to cry,  
‘Behold they tremble!—haughty their array,  
Yet of their number no one dares to die?’  
In soul I swept the indignity away:  
Old frailties then recurred:—but lofty thought,  
In act embodied, my deliverance wrought. 138

"And Thou, though strong in love, art all too  
weak  
In reason, in self-government too slow;  
I counsel thee by fortitude to seek  
Our blest reunion in the shades below.  
The invisible world with thee hath sympathized  
Be thy affections raised and solemnized. 14

144

"Learn by a mortal yearning, to ascend—  
Seeking a higher object. Love was given,  
Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;  
For this the passion to excess was driven—  
That self might be annulled: her bondage prove  
The fetters of a dream, opposed to love."— 150

I49

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Aloud she shrieked! for Hermes reappears!  
Round the dear Shade she would have clung—  
't is vain:  
The hours are past—too brief had they been  
years;  
And him no mortal effort can detain:  
Swift, toward the realms that know not earthly  
day,  
He through the portal takes his silent way,  
And on the palace-floor a lifeless corse she  
lay.

157

Thus, all in vain exhorted and reproved,  
She perished; and, as for a wilful crime,  
By the just Gods whom no weak pity moved,  
Was doomed to wear out her appointed time,  
Apart from happy Ghosts, that gather flowers  
Of blissful quiet 'mid unfading bowers. 163

—Yet tears to human suffering are due;  
And mortal hopes defeated and o'erthrown  
Are mourned by man, and not by man alone,  
As fondly he believes.—Upon the side  
Of Hellespont (such faith was entertained)  
A knot of spiry trees for ages grew  
From out the tomb of him for whom she died;  
And ever, when such stature they had gained  
That Ilium's walls were subject to their view,  
The trees' tall summits withered at the sight:  
A constant interchange of growth and  
blight!

174

1815.

*William Wordsworth.*

150

## KILMENY

From *The Queen's Wake*

BONNY Kilmeny gaed up the glen;  
But it wasna to meet Duneira's men,  
Nor the rosy monk of the isle to see,  
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.  
It was only to hear the yorlin sing,  
And pu' the cress-flower round the spring,—  
The scarlet hypp, and the hindberrye,  
And the nut that hung frae the hazel-tree;  
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.  
But lang may her minny look o'er the wa',  
And lang may she seek i' the green-wood shaw;  
Lang the laird of Duneira blame,  
And lang, lang greet or Kilmeny come hame. <sup>13</sup>

When many a day had come and fled,  
When grief grew calm, and hope was dead,  
When mass for Kilmeny's soul had been sung,  
When the bedesman had prayed, and the dead-  
bell rung;  
Late, late in a gloamin, when all was still,  
When the fringe was red on the westlin hill,  
The wood was sere, the moon i' the wane,  
The reek o' the cot hung over the plain,—  
Like a little wee cloud in the world its lane;  
When the ingle lowed with an eiry leme,  
Late, late in the gloamin Kilmeny came hame! <sup>24</sup>

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

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## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Full twenty years she has lived as free  
As the spirits that sojourn in this countrye.  
I have brought her away frae the snares of men,  
That sin or death she may never ken." 84

They clasped her waist and her hands sae  
fair;  
They kissed her cheek, and they kemed her  
hair;  
And round came many a blooming fere,  
Saying, " Bonny Kilmeny, ye 're welcome here;  
Women are freed of the littand scorn;  
O, blest be the day Kilmeny was born!  
Now shall the land of the spirits see,  
Now shall it ken, what a woman may be!  
Many a lang year in sorrow and pain,  
Many a lang year through the world we 've gane  
Commissioned to watch fair womankind,  
For it 's they who nurice the immortal mind.  
We have watched their steps as the dawning  
shone,  
And deep in the greenwood walks alone;  
By lily bower and silken bed  
The viewless tears have o'er them shed;  
Have soothed their ardent minds to sleep,  
Or left the couch of love to weep.  
We have seen! we have seen! but the time must  
come,  
And the angels will weep at the day of doom! 104

" O, would the fairest of mortal kind  
Aye keep the holy truths in mind,

## Kilmeny

That kindred spirits their motions see,  
Who watch their ways with anxious ee,  
And grieve for the guilt of humanitye!  
O, sweet to Heaven the maiden's prayer,  
And the sigh that heaves a bosom sae fair!  
And dear to Heaven the words of truth  
And the praise of virtue frae beauty's mouth!  
And dear to the viewless forms of air  
The minds that kythe as the body fair! 115

“ O bonny Kilmeny! free frae stain,  
If ever you seek the world again,—  
That world of sin, of sorrow and fear,—  
O, tell of the joys that are waiting here;  
And tell of the signs you shall shortly see;  
Of the times that are now, and the times that  
shall be.” 121

They lifted Kilmeny, they led her away,  
And she walked in the light of a sunless day;  
The sky was a dome of crystal bright,  
The fountain of vision, and fountain of light;  
The emerald fields were of dazzling glow,  
And the flowers of everlasting blow.  
Then deep in the stream her body they laid,  
That her youth and beauty never might fade;  
And they smiled on heaven, when they saw her  
lie

In the stream of life that wandered by.  
And she heard a song,—she heard it sung,  
She kend not where; but sae sweetly it rung,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

It fell on her ear like a dream of the morn,—  
"O, blest be the day Kilmeny was born!  
Now shall the land of the spirits see,  
Now shall it ken, what a woman may be!  
The sun that shines on the world sae bright,  
A borrowed gleid frae the fountain of light;  
And the moon that sleeks the sky sae dun,  
Like a gowden bow, or a beamless sun,  
Shall wear away, and be seen nae mair;  
And the angels shall miss them, travelling the  
air.  
But lang, lang after baith night and day,  
When the sun and the world have elyed away,  
When the sinner has gane to his waesome doom,  
Kilmeny shall smile in eternal bloom!" 147

They bore her away, she wist not how,  
For she felt not arm nor rest below;  
But so swift they wained her through the light,  
'T was like the motion of sound or sight;  
They seemed to split the gales of air,  
And yet nor gale nor breeze was there.  
Unnumbered groves below them grew;  
They came, they past, and backward flew,  
Like floods of blossoms gliding on,  
In moment seen, in moment gone.  
O, never vales to mortal view  
Appeared like those o'er which they flew,  
That land to human spirits given,  
The lowermost vales of the storied heaven;  
From whence they can view the world below,

DERWENT AND BASSENTHWAITE LAKES, CUMBERLAND





## Kilmeny

And heaven's blue gates with sapphires glow,—  
More glory yet unmeet to know. 164

They bore her far to a mountain green,  
To see what mortal never had seen;  
And they seated her high on a purple sward,  
And bade her heed what she saw and heard,  
And note the changes the spirits wrought;—  
For now she lived in the land of thought.—  
She looked, and she saw nor sun nor skies,  
But a crystal dome of a thousand dyes;  
She looked, and she saw nae land aright,  
But an endless whirl of glory and light;  
And radiant beings went and came,  
Far swifter than wind or the linkèd flame;  
She hid her een frae the dazzling view;  
She looked again, and the scene was new. 178

She saw a sun on a summer sky,  
And clouds of amber sailing by;  
A lovely land beneath her lay,  
And that land had glens and mountains gray;  
And that land had valleys and hoary piles,  
And marlèd seas, and a thousand isles;  
Its fields were speckled, its forests green,  
And its lakes were all of the dazzling sheen,  
Like magic mirrors, where slumbering lay  
The sun and the sky and the cloudlet gray,  
Which heaved and trembled and gently swung;  
On every shore they seemed to be hung;  
For there they were seen on their downward  
plain

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

A thousand times and a thousand again;  
In winding lake and placid firth,—  
Little peaceful heavens in the bosom of earth. <sup>194</sup>

Kilmeny sighed and seemed to grieve,  
For she found her heart to that land did cleave;  
She saw the corn wave on the vale;  
She saw the deer run down the dale;  
She saw the plaid and the broad claymore,  
And the brows that the badge of freedom bore;  
And she thought she had seen the land  
before. 201

She saw a lady sit on a throne,  
The fairest that ever the sun shone on:  
A lion licked her hand of milk,  
And she held him in a leish of silk;  
And a leifu' maiden stood at her knee,  
With a silver wand and melting ee;  
Her sovereign shield till love stole in,  
And poisoned all the fount within. 209

Then a gruff untoward bedesman came,  
And hundit the lion on his dame;  
And the guardian maid wi' the dauntless ee,  
She dropped a tear, and left her knee;  
And she saw till the queen frae the lion fled,  
Till the bonniest flower of the world lay dead;  
A coffin was set on a distant plain,  
And she saw the red blood fall like rain:

## Kilmeny

Then bonny Kilmeny's heart grew sair,  
And she turned away, and could look nae  
mair.

219

Then the gruff grim carle girned amain,  
And they trampled him down, but he rose again ;  
And he baited the lion to deeds of weir,  
Till he lapped the blood to the kingdom dear ;  
And weening his head was danger-preef,  
When crowned with the rose and clover leaf,  
He gowled at the carle, and chased him away  
To feed wi' the deer on the mountain gray.  
He gowled at the carle, and he gecked at  
Heaven ;  
But his mark was set, and his arles given.  
Kilmeny a while her een withdrew ;  
She looked again, and the scene was new.

231

She saw below her fair unfurled  
One half of all the glowing world,  
Where oceans rolled, and rivers ran,  
To bound the aims of sinful man.  
She saw a people, fierce and fell,  
Burst frae their bounds like fiends of hell ;  
There lilies grew, and the eagle flew,  
And she herked on her ravening crew,  
Till the cities and towers were wrapt in a blaze,  
And the thunder it roared o'er the lands and the  
seas.  
The widows they wailed, and the red blood ran,  
And she threatened an end to the race of man :

159

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

She never fened, nor stood in awe,  
Till caught by the lion's deadly paw.  
Oh! then the eagle swinked for life,  
And brainzelled up a mortal strife;  
But flew she north, or flew she south,  
She met wi' the gowl of the lion's mouth. 249

With a mooted wing and waefu' maen,  
The eagle sought her eiry again;  
But lang may she cower in her bloody nest,  
And lang, lang sleek her wounded breast,  
Before she sey another flight,  
To play wi' the norland lion's might. 255

But to sing the sights Kilmeny saw,  
So far surpassing nature's law,  
The singer's voice wad sink away,  
And the string of his harp wad cease to play.  
But she saw till the sorrows of man were by,  
And all was love and harmony;—  
Till the stars of heaven fell calmly away,  
Like the flakes of snaw on a winter's day. 263

Then Kilmeny begged again to see  
The friends she had left in her own countrie,  
To tell the place where she had been,  
And the glories that lay in the land unseen;  
To warn the living maidens fair,  
The loved of heaven, the spirits' care,  
That all whose minds unmeled remain  
Shall bloom in beauty when time is gane. 271

## Kilmeny

With distant music, soft and deep,  
They lulled Kilmeny sound asleep ;  
And when she awakened, she lay her lane,  
All happed with flowers in the green-wood wene.  
When seven long years had come and fled ;  
When grief was calm, and hope was dead ;  
When scarce was remembered Kilmeny's name,  
Late, late in the gloamin, Kilmeny came hame !  
And O, her beauty was fair to see,  
But still and steadfast was her ee !  
Such beauty bard may never declare,  
For there was no pride nor passion there ;  
And the soft desire of maidens' een  
In that mild face could never be seen.  
Her seymar was the lily flower,  
And her cheek the moss-rose in the shower ;  
And her voice like the distant melodye  
That floats along the twilight sea.  
But she loved to raike the lanely glen,  
And keeped afar frae the haunts of men ;  
Her holy hymns unheard to sing,  
To suck the flowers and drink the spring.  
But wherever her peaceful form appeared,  
The wild beasts of the hills were cheered ;  
The wolf played blythely round the field ;  
The lordly byson lowed and kneeled ;  
The dun deer wooed with manner bland,  
And cowered aneath her lily hand.  
And when at even the woodlands rung,  
When hymns of other worlds she sung  
In ecstasy of sweet devotion,  
O, then the glen was all in motion !

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The wild beasts of the forest came,  
Broke from their bughts and faulds the tame,  
And goved around, charmed and amazed ;  
Even the dull cattle crooned, and gazed,  
And murmured, and looked with anxious pain  
For something the mystery to explain.  
The buzzard came with the throstle-cock,  
The corby left her houf in the rock ;  
The blackbird alang wi' the eagle flew ;  
The hind came tripping o'er the dew ;  
The wolf and the kid their raike began ;  
And the tod, and the lamb, and the leveret ran ;  
The hawk and the hern attour them hung,  
And the merl and the mavis forhooyed their  
young ;  
And all in a peaceful ring were hurled :  
It was like an eve in a sinless world !

319

When a month and a day had come and gane,  
Kilmeny sought the green-wood wene ;  
There laid her down on the leaves sae green,  
And Kilmeny on earth was never mair seen.  
But O the words that fell from her mouth  
Were words of wonder, and words of truth !  
But all the land were in fear and dread,  
For they kendna whether she was living or  
dead.

It wasna her hame, and she couldna remain ;  
She left this world of sorrow and pain,  
And returned to the land of thought again. 330

1813.

James Hogg.

# THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

## A CHILD'S STORY

HAMELIN Town 's in Brunswick,  
By famous Hanover city;  
The river Weser, deep and wide,  
Washes its wall on the southern side;  
A pleasanter spot you never spied;  
But, when begins my ditty,  
Almost five hundred years ago,  
To see the townsfolk suffer so  
From vermin, was a pity.

9

Rats!  
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,  
And bit the babies in the cradles,  
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
And licked the soup from the cooks' own  
ladles,  
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,  
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,  
And even spoiled the women's chats  
By drowning their speaking  
With shrieking and squeaking  
In fifty different sharps and flats.

20

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

At last the people in a body  
To the Town Hall came flocking :  
" 'T is clear," cried they, " our Mayor 's a noddy ;  
And as for our Corporation—shocking  
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine  
For dolts that can 't or won 't determine  
What 's best to rid us of our vermin !  
You hope, because you 're old and obese,  
To find in the furry civic robe ease ?  
Rouse up, sirs ! Give your brains a racking  
To find the remedy we 're lacking,  
Or, sure as fate, we 'll send you packing ! "  
At this the Mayor and Corporation  
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

34

An hour they sat in council ;  
At length the Mayor broke silence :  
" For a guilder I 'd my ermine gown sell,  
I wish I were a mile hence !  
It 's easy to bid one rack one 's brain—  
I 'm sure my poor head aches again,  
I 've scratched it so, and all in vain.  
Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap ! "  
Just as he said this, what should hap  
At the chamber-door but a gentle tap ?  
" Bless us," cried the Mayor, " what 's that ? "  
(With the Corporation as he sat,  
Looking little though wondrous fat ;  
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister  
Than a too-long-opened oyster,  
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous  
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous )

## The Pied Piper of Hamelin

“ Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?  
Anything like the sound of a rat  
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat ! ”

54

“ Come in ! ”—the Mayor cried, looking bigger :  
And in did come the strangest figure !  
His queer long coat from heel to head  
Was half of yellow and half of red,  
And he himself was tall and thin,  
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,  
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,  
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,  
But lips where smiles went out and in ;  
There was no guessing his kith and kin :  
And nobody could enough admire  
The tall man and his quaint attire.  
Quoth one : “ It’s as my great-grandsire,  
Starting up at the Trump of Doom’s tone,  
Had walked this way from his painted tomb-  
stone ! ”

69

He advanced to the council-table :  
And, “ Please your honors,” said he, “ I’m able,  
By means of a secret charm, to draw  
All creatures living beneath the sun,  
That creep or swim or fly or run,  
After me so as you never saw !  
And I chiefly use my charm  
On creatures that do people harm,  
The mole and toad and newt and viper ;  
And people call me the Pied Piper.”  
(And here they noticed round his neck

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

A scarf of red and yellow stripe,  
To match with his coat of the self-same check;  
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;  
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying  
As if impatient to be playing  
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled  
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)

“Yet,” said he, “poor piper as I am,  
In Tartary I freed the Cham,  
Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;  
I eased in Asia the Nizam  
Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats:  
And as for what your brain bewilders,  
If I can rid your town of rats  
Will you give me a thousand guilders?”  
“One? fifty thousand!”—was the exclamation  
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation. 97

Into the street the Piper stepped,  
Smiling first a little smile,  
As if he knew what magic slept  
In his quiet pipe the while;  
Then, like a musical adept,  
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,  
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,  
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;  
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,  
You heard as if an army muttered;  
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;  
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;  
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.

## The Pied Piper of Hamelin

Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,  
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,  
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,  
Families by tens and dozens,  
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—  
Followed the Piper for their lives.  
From street to street he piped advancing,  
And step for step they followed dancing,  
Until they came to the river Weser,  
Wherein all plunged and perished!  
—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,  
Swam across and lived to carry  
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)  
To Rat-land home his commentary:  
Which was, “At the first shrill notes of the pipe,  
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,  
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,  
Into a cider-press’s gripe:  
And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,  
And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,  
And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,  
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:  
And it seemed as if a voice  
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery  
Is breathed) called out, ‘O rats, rejoice!  
The world is grown to one vast dry-saltery!  
So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,  
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!  
And just as a bulky sugar puncheon,  
All ready staved, like a great sun shone

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Glorious scarce an inch before me,  
Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me !'  
—I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

145

You should have heard the Hamelin people  
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.  
"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,  
Poke out the nests and block up the holes !  
Consult with carpenters and builders,  
And leave in our town not even a trace  
Of the rats!"—when suddenly, up the face  
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,  
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand  
guilders!"

154

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ;  
So did the Corporation too.  
For council dinners made rare havoc  
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;  
And half the money would replenish  
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.  
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow  
With a gypsy coat of red and yellow !  
"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,  
"Our business was done at the river's brink ;  
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,  
And what's dead can't come to life, I think.  
So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink  
From the duty of giving you something for drink,  
And a matter of money to put in your poke ;  
But as for the guilders, what we spoke  
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.

168

## The Pied Piper of Hamelin

Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.  
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

173

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,  
"No trifling! I can't wait, beside!  
I've promised to visit by dinner time  
Bagdat, and accept the prime  
Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,  
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,  
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:  
With him I proved no bargain-driver,  
With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!  
And folks who put me in a passion  
May find me pipe after another fashion."

184

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d' ye think I brook  
Being worse treated than a Cook?  
Insulted by a lazy ribald  
With idle pipe and vesture piebald?  
You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,  
Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

190

Once more he stepped into the street,  
And to his lips again  
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;  
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning  
Never gave the enraptured air)  
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling  
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hus-  
tling;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,  
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,  
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,  
Out came the children running.  
All the little boys and girls,  
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,  
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,  
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after  
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

207

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood  
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,  
Unable to move a step, or cry  
To the children merrily skipping by,  
— Could only follow with the eye  
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.  
But how the Mayor was on the rack,  
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,  
As the Piper turned from the High Street  
To where the Weser rolled its waters  
Right in the way of their sons and daughters !  
However, he turned from South to West,  
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,  
And after him the children pressed ;  
Great was the joy in every breast.  
“ He never can cross that mighty top !  
He 's forced to let the piping drop,  
And we shall see our children stop ! ”

## The Pied Piper of Hamelin

When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,  
A wondrous portal opened wide,  
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;  
And the Piper advanced and the children fol-  
lowed,

And when all were in to the very last,  
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.  
Did I say all? No! One was lame,  
And could not dance the whole of the way;  
And in after years if you would blame  
His sadness, he was used to say,—

“It’s dull in our town since my playmates left!  
I can’t forget that I’m bereft  
Of all the pleasant sights they see,  
Which the Piper also promised me.  
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,  
Joining the town and just at hand,  
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew  
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,  
And everything was strange and new;  
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks  
here,

And their dogs outran our fallow deer,  
And honey-bees had lost their stings,  
And horses were born with eagles’ wings;  
And just as I became assured  
My lame foot would be speedily cured,  
The music stopped and I stood still,  
And found myself outside the hill,  
Left alone against my will,  
To go now limping as before,  
And never hear of that country more!”

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Alas, alas for Hamelin!  
There came into many a burgher's pate  
A text which says that heaven's gate  
Opes to the rich at as easy rate  
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!  
The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,  
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,  
Wherever it was men's lot to find him,  
Silver and gold to his heart's content,  
If he'd only return the way he went,  
And bring the children behind him.  
But when they saw 't was a lost endeavor,  
And Piper and dancers were gone forever,  
They made a decree that lawyers never  
Should think their records dated duly  
If, after the day of the month and year,  
These words did not as well appear,  
"And so long after what happened here  
On the Twenty second of July,  
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six":  
And the better in memory to fix  
The place of the children's last retreat,  
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—  
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor  
Was sure for the future to lose his labor.  
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern  
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;  
But opposite the place of the cavern  
They wrote the story on a column,  
And on the great church-window painted  
The same, to make the world acquainted  
How their children were stolen away,

## The Jackdaw of Rheims

And there it stands to this very day.  
And I must not omit to say ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup>  
That in Transylvania there's a tribe  
Of alien people who ascribe  
The outlandish ways and dress  
On which their neighbors lay such stress,  
To their fathers and mothers having risen  
Out of some subterraneous prison  
Into which they were trepanned  
Long time ago in a mighty band  
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,  
But how or why, they don't understand. 299

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers  
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers!  
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or  
from mice,  
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our  
promise! 303

1843.

*Robert Browning.*

## THE JACKDAW OF RHEIMS

THE Jackdaw sat on the Cardinal's chair!  
Bishop and abbot and prior were there;  
Many a monk, and many a friar,  
Many a knight, and many a squire,  
With a great many more of lesser degree,—  
In sooth, a goodly company;  
And they served the Lord Primate on bended  
knee.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Never, I ween,  
Was a prouder seen,  
Read of in books, or dreamt of in dreams, 10  
Than the Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Rheims !  
In and out,  
Through the motley rout,  
That little Jackdaw kept hopping about ;  
Here and there,  
Like a dog in a fair,  
Over comfits and cates,  
And dishes and plates,  
Cowl and cope, and rochet and pall,  
Mitre and crosier,—he hopped upon all. 20  
With a saucy air,  
He perched on the chair  
Where, in state, the great Lord Cardinal sat,  
In the great Lord Cardinal's great red hat ;  
And he peered in the face  
Of his Lordship's Grace,  
With a satisfied look, as if he would say,  
“WE TWO are the greatest folks here to-day !”  
And the priests, with awe,  
As such freaks they saw, 30  
Said, “The Devil must be in that little Jack-  
daw !”

The feast was over, the board was cleared,  
The flawns and the custards had all disappeared,  
And six little Singing-boys,—dear little souls  
In nice clean faces, and nice white stoles,—  
Came, in order due,  
Two by two,

## The Jackdaw of Rheims

Marching that grand refectory through!  
A nice little boy held a golden ewer,  
Embossed and filled with water, as pure      40  
As any that flows between Rheims and Namur,  
Which a nice little boy stood ready to catch  
In a fine golden hand-basin made to match.  
Two nice little boys, rather more grown,  
Carried lavender-water and eau-de-Cologne;  
And a nice little boy had a nice cake of soap,  
Worthy of washing the hands of the Pope!

One little boy more  
A napkin bore,  
Of the best white diaper, fringed with pink,      50  
And a cardinal's Hat marked in "permanent ink."

The great Lord Cardinal turns at the sight  
Of these nice little boys dressed all in white;  
From his finger he draws  
His costly turquoise:  
And, not thinking at all about little Jackdaws,  
Deposits it straight  
By the side of his plate,  
While the nice little boys on his Eminence wait;  
Till, when nobody's dreaming of any such      60  
thing,  
That little Jackdaw hops off with the ring!

There's a cry and a shout,  
And a deuce of a rout,  
And nobody seems to know what they're about,  
But the monks have their pockets all turned  
inside out;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The friars are kneeling,

And hunting and feeling

The carpet, the floor, and the walls, and the  
ceiling.

The Cardinal drew

Off each plum-colored shoe,

70

And left his red stockings exposed to the view;

He peeps, and he feels

In the toes and the heels.

They turn up the dishes,—they turn up the  
plates,—

They take up the poker and poke out the grates,

—They turn up the rugs,

They examine the mugs;

But, no!—no such thing,—

They can't find THE RING!

And the Abbot declared that "when nobody  
twigged it,

80

Some rascal or other had popped in and prigged  
it!"

The Cardinal rose with a dignified look,  
He called for his candle, his bell, and his book!

In holy anger and pious grief

He solemnly cursed that rascally thief!

He cursed him at board, he cursed him in bed;  
From the sole of his foot to the crown of his  
head;

He cursed him in sleeping, that every night  
He should dream of the Devil, and wake in a  
fright.

He cursed him in eating, he cursed him in  
drinking,

90

## The Jackdaw of Rheims

He cursed him in coughing, in sneezing, in  
winking;

He cursed him in sitting, in standing, in lying;  
He cursed him in walking, in riding, in flying;  
He cursed him living, he cursed him dying!—

Never was heard such a terrible curse!!

But what gave rise  
To no little surprise,

Nobody seemed one penny the worse!

The day was gone,

The night came on,

The monks and the friars they searched till  
dawn;

When the sacristan saw,

On crumpled claw,

Come limping a poor little lame Jackdaw!

No longer gay,

As on yesterday;

His feathers all seemed to be turned the wrong  
way;—

His pinions drooped,—he could hardly stand,—  
His head was as bald as the palm of your hand;

His eye so dim,

So wasted each limb,

That, heedless of grammar, they all cried,

“THAT’S HIM!—

That’s the scamp that has done this scandalous  
thing,

That’s the thief that has got my Lord Cardinal’s  
Ring!”

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The poor little Jackdaw,  
When the monks he saw,  
Feebly gave vent to the ghost of a caw;  
And turned his bald head as much as to say,  
"Pray be so good as to walk this way!" 120  
Slower and slower  
He limped on before,  
Till they came to the back of the belfry-door,  
Where the first thing they saw,  
Midst the sticks and the straw,  
Was the RING, in the nest of that little Jackdaw!

Then the great Lord Cardinal called for his  
book,  
And off that terrible curse he took:  
The mute expression  
Served in lieu of confession, 130  
And, being thus coupled with full restitution,  
The Jackdaw got plenary absolution!  
—When those words were heard,  
That poor little bird  
Was so changed in a moment, 't was really  
absurd:  
He grew sleek and fat;  
In addition to that,  
A fresh crop of feathers came thick as a mat!  
His tail wagged more  
Even than before; 140  
But no longer it wagged with an impudent air,  
No longer he perched on the Cardinal's chair:  
He hopped now about  
With a gait devout;

## The Jackdaw of Rheims

At Matins, at Vespers, he never was out;  
And, so far from any more pilfering deeds,  
He always seemed telling the Confessor's beads.  
If any one lied, or if any one swore,  
Or slumbered in prayer-time and happened to  
snore,

That good Jackdaw 150  
Would give a great "Caw!"

As much as to say, "Don't do so any more!"  
While many remarked, as his manners they saw,  
That they "never had known such a pious Jack-  
daw!"

He long lived the pride  
Of that country side,  
And at last in the odor of sanctity died;  
When, as words were too faint  
His merits to paint,  
The Conclave determined to make him a

160  
Saint.

And on newly-made Saints and Popes, as you  
know,  
It's the custom of Rome new names to bestow,  
So they canonized him by the name of Jim  
Crow!

1840.

*Richard Harris Barham  
(Thomas Ingoldsby, Esq.).*



# BRIEF EPICS AND TALES



## THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB

THE Assyrian came down like the wolf on the  
fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and  
gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on  
the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep  
Galilee.

4

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is  
green,  
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:  
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath  
blown,  
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and  
strown.

8

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the  
blast,  
And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd;  
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and  
chill,  
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever  
grew still!

12

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  
But through it there roll'd not the breath of his  
pride:

And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf. 16

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,  
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his  
mail:

And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,  
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown. 20

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,  
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal:  
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the  
sword,

Hath melted like snow in the glance of the  
Lord!

1815.

*Lord Byron.*

24

## THE RELIEF OF LUCKNOW

Oh, that last day in Lucknow fort!

We knew that it was the last;  
That the enemy's lines crept surely on,  
And the end was coming fast.

4

To yield to that foe meant worse than death;  
And the men and we all worked on:  
It was one day more of smoke and roar,  
And then it would all be done.

5

184

## The Relief of Lucknow

There was one of us, a corporal's wife,  
A fair, young, gentle thing,<sup>10</sup>  
Wasted with fever in the siege,  
And her mind was wandering.

12

She lay on the ground, in her Scottish plaid,  
And I took her head on my knee;  
"When my father comes hame frae the pleugh,"  
she said,  
"Oh! then please wauken me."<sup>16</sup>

16

She slept like a child on her father's floor,  
In the flecking of woodbine-shade,  
When the house dog sprawls by the open door,  
And the mother's wheel is stayed.

20

It was smoke and roar and powder stench,  
And hopeless waiting for death;  
And the soldier's wife, like a full-tired child,  
Seemed scarce to draw her breath.

24

I sank to sleep; and I had my dream  
Of an English village-lane,  
And wall and garden;—but one wild scream  
Brought me back to the roar again.

28

There Jessie Brown stood listening  
Till a sudden gladness broke  
All over her face; and she caught my hand  
And drew me near as she spoke:—

32

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

“The Hielanders! O! dinna ye hear

The slogan far awa?

The McGregor’s. O! I ken it weel;

It’s the grandest o’ them a’!

36

“God bless the bonny Hielanders!

We’re saved! we’re saved!” she cried;  
And fell on her knees; and thanks to God

Flowed forth like a full flood-tide.

40

Along the battery-line her cry

Had fallen among the men,

And they started back;—they were there to die;

But was life so near them, then?

44

They listened for life; the rattling fire

Far off, and the far-off roar,

Were all; and the colonel shook his head,

And they turned to their guns once more.

48

But Jessie said, “The slogan’s done;

But winna ye hear it noo,

*The Campbells are comin’?* It’s no a dream;

Our succors hae broken through!”

52

We heard the roar and the rattle afar,

But the pipes we could not hear;

So the men plied their work of hopeless war,

And knew that the end was near.

56

It was not long ere it made its way,—

A thrilling, ceaseless sound:

## Marco Bozzaris

It was no noise from the strife afar,  
Or the sappers under the ground.

60

It was the pipes of the Highlanders!  
And now they played *Auld Lang Syne*.  
It came to our men like the voice of God,  
And they shouted along the line.

64

And they wept, and shook one another's hands,  
And the women sobbed in a crowd;  
And every one knelt down where he stood,  
And we all thanked God aloud.

68

That happy time, when we welcomed them,  
Our men put Jessie first;  
And the general gave her his hand, and cheers  
Like a storm from the soldiers burst.

72

And the pipers' ribbons and tartan streamed,  
Marching round and round our line;  
And our joyful cheers were broken with tears,  
As the pipes played *Auld Lang Syne*.

76

1860.

*Robert Traill Spence Lowell.*

## MARCO BOZZARIS

At midnight, in his guarded tent,  
The Turk was dreaming of the hour  
When Greece, her knee in suppliance bent,  
Should tremble at his power.

187

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

In dreams, through camp and court, he bore  
The trophies of a conqueror;  
In dreams his song of triumph heard;  
Then wore his monarch's signet-ring,  
Then pressed that monarch's throne—a king;  
As wild his thoughts, and gay of wing,  
As Eden's garden bird. 11

At midnight, in the forest shades,  
Bozzaris ranged his Suliote band,—  
True as the steel of their tried blades,  
Heroes in heart and hand.  
There had the Persian's thousands stood,  
There had the glad earth drunk their blood,  
On old Platæa's day;  
And now there breathed that haunted air  
The sons of sires who conquered there,  
With arm to strike, and soul to dare,  
As quick, as far as they. 22

An hour passed on, the Turk awoke:  
That bright dream was his last;  
He woke—to hear his sentries shriek,  
“To arms! they come! the Greek! the  
Greek!”  
He woke—to die midst flame, and smoke,  
And shout, and groan, and sabre-stroke,  
And death-shots falling thick and fast  
As lightnings from the mountain-cloud;  
And heard, with voice as trumpet loud,  
Bozzaris cheer his band:

## Marco Bozzaris

“ Strike—till the last armed foe expires;  
Strike—for your altars and your fires;  
Strike—for the green graves of your sires,  
God, and your native land!” 36

They fought—like brave men, long and well;  
They piled that ground with Moslem slain:  
They conquered—but Bozzaris fell,  
Bleeding at every vein.  
His few surviving comrades saw  
His smile when rang their proud hurrah,  
And the red field was won;  
Then saw in death his eyelids close  
Calmly, as to a night’s repose,  
Like flowers at set of sun. 46

Come to the bridal-chamber, Death,  
Come to the mother, when she feels,  
For the first time, her first-born’s breath;  
Come when the blessed seals  
That close the pestilence are broke,  
And crowded cities wail its stroke;  
Come in consumption’s ghastly form,  
The earthquake shock, the ocean storm;  
Come when the heart beats high and warm  
With banquet song and dance and wine,—  
And thou art terrible; the tear,  
The groan, the knell, the pall, the bier,  
And all we know, or dream, or fear  
Of agony, are thine. 60

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

But to the hero, when his sword  
Has won the battle for the free,  
Thy voice sounds like a prophet's word,  
And in its hollow tones are heard  
The thanks of millions yet to be.  
Come when his task of fame is wrought ;  
Come with her laurel-leaf, blood-bought ;  
Come in her crowning hour,—and then  
Thy sunken eye's unearthly light  
To him is welcome as the sight  
Of sky and stars to prisoned men ;  
Thy grasp is welcome as the hand  
Of brother in a foreign land ;  
Thy summons welcome as the cry  
That told the Indian isles were nigh  
To the world-seeking Genoese,  
When the land-wind, from woods of palm,  
And orange-groves, and fields of balm,  
Blew o'er the Haytian seas.

75

Bozzaris ! with the storied brave  
Greece nurtured in her glory's time,  
Rest thee ; there is no prouder grave,  
Even in her own proud clime.  
She wore no funeral-weeds for thee.  
Nor bade the dark hearse wave its plume,  
Like torn branch from death's leafless tree,  
In sorrow's pomp and pageantry.  
The heartless luxury of the tomb.  
But she remembers thee as one  
Long loved, and for a season gone.

## The Prisoner of Chillon

For thee her poet's lyre is wreathed,  
Her marble wrought, her music breathed  
For thee she rings the birthday bells ;  
Of thee her babe's first lisping tells ;  
For thine her evening prayer is said  
At palace couch and cottage bed.  
Her soldier, closing with the foe,  
Gives for thy sake a deadlier blow ;  
His plighted maiden, when she fears  
For him, the joy of her young years,  
Thinks of thy fate, and checks her tears.

And she, the mother of thy boys,  
Though in her eye and faded cheek  
Is read the grief she will not speak,

The memory of her buried joys,—  
And even she who gave thee birth,—  
Will, by her pilgrim-circled hearth,

Talk of thy doom without a sigh;  
For thou art Freedom's now, and Fame's,—  
One of the few, the immortal names,

That were not born to die.

# THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

My hair is gray, but not with years,  
Nor grew it white  
In a single night,  
As men's have grown from sudden fears;  
My limbs are bow'd, though not with toil,  
But rusted with a vile repose,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

For they have been a dungeon's spoil,  
And mine has been the fate of those  
To whom the goodly earth and air  
Are bann'd, and barr'd—forbidden fare;  
But this was for my father's faith  
I suffer'd chains and courted death;  
That father perish'd at the stake  
For tenets he would not forsake;  
And for the same his lineal race  
In darkness found a dwelling-place;  
We were seven—who now are one,  
Six in youth, and one in age,  
Finish'd as they had begun,  
Proud of Persecution's rage;  
One in fire, and two in field,  
Their belief with blood have seal'd,  
Dying as their father died,  
For the God their foes denied;  
Three were in a dungeon cast,  
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

26

There are seven pillars of Gothic mould,  
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,  
There are seven columns, massy and gray,  
Dim with a dull imprison'd ray,  
A sunbeam which hath lost its way,  
And through the crevice and the cleft  
Of the thick wall is fallen and left;  
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,  
Like a marsh's meteor-lamp:  
And in each pillar there is a ring,  
And in each ring there is a chain;

## The Prisoner of Chillon

That iron is a cankering thing,  
For in these limbs its teeth remain,  
With marks that will not wear away,  
Till I have done with this new day,  
Which now is painful to these eyes,  
Which have not seen the sun so rise  
For years—I cannot count them o'er,  
I lost their long and heavy score,  
When my last brother droop'd and died,  
And I lay living by his side.

47

They chain'd us each to a column stone,  
And we were three—yet, each alone ;  
We could not move a single pace,  
We could not see each other's face,  
But with that pale and livid light  
That made us strangers in our sight :  
And thus together—yet apart,  
Fetter'd in hand, but join'd in heart,  
'T was still some solace, in the dearth  
Of the pure elements of earth,  
To hearken to each other's speech,  
And each turn comforter to each  
With some new hope, or legend old,  
Or song heroically bold ;  
But even these at length grew cold.  
Our voices took a dreary tone,  
An echo of the dungeon stone,  
A grating sound, not full and free,  
As they of yore were wont to be :  
It might be fancy, but to me  
They never sounded like our own.

68

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

I was the eldest of the three,  
And to uphold and cheer the rest  
I ought to do—and did my best—  
And each did well in his degree.

The youngest, whom my father loved,  
Because our mother's brow was given  
To him, with eyes as blue as heaven—  
For him my soul was sorely moved;  
And truly might it be distress'd  
To see such bird in such a nest;  
For he was beautiful as day—  
(When day was beautiful to me  
As to young eagles, being free)—  
A polar day, which will not see  
A sunset till its summer's gone,  
Its sleepless summer of long light,  
The snow-clad offspring of the sun:  
And thus he was as pure **and** bright,  
And in his natural spirit gay,  
With tears for nought but others' ills,  
And then they flow'd like mountain rills,  
Unless he could assuage the woe  
Which he abhor'd to view below.

91

The other was as pure of mind,  
But form'd to combat with his kind;  
Strong in his frame, and of a mood  
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,  
And perish'd in the foremost rank  
With joy:—but not in chains to pine:  
His spirit wither'd with their clank,

## The Prisoner of Chillon

I saw it silently decline—  
And so perchance in sooth did mine:  
But yet I forced it on to cheer  
Those relics of a home so dear.  
He was a hunter of the hills,  
Had follow'd there the deer and wolf;  
To him his dungeon was a gulf,  
And fetter'd feet the worst of ills.

106

Lake Leman lies by Chillon's walls:  
A thousand feet in depth below  
Its massy waters meet and flow;  
Thus much the fathom-line was sent  
From Chillon's snow-white battlement,  
Which round about the wave in thrals:  
A double dungeon wall and wave  
Have made—and like a living grave  
Below the surface of the lake  
The dark vault lies wherein we lay,  
We heard it ripple night and day;  
Sounding o'er our heads it knock'd;  
And I have felt the winter's spray  
Wash through the bars when winds were high  
And wanton in the happy sky;  
And then the very rock hath rock'd,  
And I have felt it shake, unshock'd,  
Because I could have smiled to see  
The death that would have set me free.

125

I said my nearer brother pined,  
I said his mighty heart declined,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

He loathed and put away his food;  
It was not that 't was coarse and rude,  
For we were used to hunter's fare,  
And for the like had little care:  
The milk drawn from the mountain goat  
Was changed for water from the moat,  
Our bread was such as captives' tears  
Have moisten'd many a thousand years,  
Since man first pent his fellow men  
Like brutes within an iron den;  
But what were these to us or him?  
These wasted not his heart or limb;  
My brother's soul was of that mould  
Which in a palace had grown cold,  
Had his free breathing been denied  
The range of the steep mountain's side:  
But why delay the truth?—he died.  
I saw, and could not hold his head,  
Nor reach his dying hand—nor dead,—  
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,  
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.  
He died, and they unlock'd his chain,  
And scoop'd for him a shallow grave  
Even from the cold earth of our cave.  
I begg'd them as a boon to lay  
His corse in dust whereon the day  
Might shine—it was a foolish thought,  
But then within my brain it wrought,  
That even in death his freeborn breast  
In such a dungeon could not rest.  
I might have spared my idle prayer—  
They coldly laugh'd, and laid him there:

## The Prisoner of Chillon

The flat and turfless earth above  
The being we so much did love ;  
His empty chain above it leant,  
Such murder's fitting monument !

163

But he, the favourite and the flower,  
Most cherish'd since his natal hour,  
His mother's image in fair face,  
The infant love of all his race,  
His martyr'd father's dearest thought,  
My latest care, for whom I sought  
To hoard my life, that his might be  
Less wretched now, and one day free ;  
He, too, who yet had held untired  
A spirit natural or inspired—  
He, too, was struck, and day by day  
Was wither'd on the stalk away.

175

Oh, God ! it is a fearful thing  
To see the human soul take wing  
In any shape, in any mood :  
I 've seen it rushing forth in blood,  
I 've seen it on the breaking ocean  
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,  
I 've seen the sick and ghastly bed  
Of Sin delirious with its dread ;  
But these were horrors—this was woe  
Unmix'd with such—but sure and slow :  
He faded, and so calm and meek,  
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,  
So tearless, yet so tender, kind,  
And grieved for those he left behind ;

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## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

With all the while a cheek whose bloom  
Was as a mockery of the tomb,  
Whose tints as gently sunk away  
As a departing rainbow's ray;  
An eye of most transparent light,  
That almost made the dungeon bright,  
And not a word of murmur, not  
A groan o'er his untimely lot,—  
A little talk of better days,  
A little hope my own to raise,  
For I was sunk in silence—lost  
In this last loss, of all the most;  
And then the sighs he would suppress  
Of fainting nature's feebleness,  
More slowly drawn, grew less and less:  
I listen'd, but I could not hear;  
I call'd, for I was wild with fear;  
I knew 't was hopeless, but my dread  
Would not be thus admonished;  
I call'd, and thought I heard a sound—  
I burst my chain with one strong bound,  
And rush'd to him:—I found him not,  
*I* only stirr'd in this black spot,  
*I* only lived, *I* only drew  
The accursed breath of dungeon-dew;  
The last, the sole, the dearest link  
Between me and the eternal brink,  
Which bound me to my failing race,  
Was broken in this fatal place.  
One on the earth, and one beneath—  
My brothers—both had ceased to breathe:

## The Prisoner of Chillon

I took that hand which lay so still,  
Alas ! my own was full as chill ;  
I had not strength to stir, or strive,  
But felt that I was still alive—  
A frantic feeling, when we know  
That what we love shall ne'er be so.

I know not why  
I could not die,  
I had no earthly hope but faith,  
And that forbade a selfish death.

230

What next befell me then and there  
I know not well—I never knew—  
First came the loss of light, and air,  
And then of darkness too :  
I had no thought, no feeling—none—  
Among the stones I stood a stone,  
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,  
As shrubless crags within the mist ;  
For all was blank, and bleak, and gray ;  
It was not night, it was not day ;  
It was not even the dungeon-light,  
So hateful to my heavy sight,  
But vacancy absorbing space,  
And fixedness without a place ;  
There were no stars, no earth, no time,  
No check, no change, no good, no crime,  
But silence, and a stirless breath  
Which neither was of life nor death ;  
A sea of stagnant idleness,  
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless !

250

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

A light broke in upon my brain,—  
It was the carol of a bird;  
It ceased, and then it came again,  
The sweetest song ear ever heard,  
And mine was thankful till my eyes  
Ran over with the glad surprise,  
And they that moment could not see  
I was the mate of misery;  
But then by dull degrees came back  
My senses to their wonted track;  
I saw the dungeon walls and floor  
Close slowly round me as before,  
I saw the glimmer of the sun  
Creeping as it before had done,  
But through the crevice where it came  
That bird was perch'd, as fond and tame,  
And tamer than upon the tree;  
A lovely bird, with azure wings,  
And song that said a thousand things,  
And seem'd to say them all for me!  
I never saw its like before,  
I ne'er shall see its likeness more:  
It seem'd like me to want a mate,  
But was not half so desolate,  
And it was come to love me when  
None lived to love me so again,  
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,  
Had brought me back to feel and think.  
I know not if it late were free,  
Or broke its cage to perch on mine,  
But knowing well captivity,  
Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!

## The Prisoner of Chillon

Or if it were, in winged guise,  
A visitant from Paradise;  
For—Heaven forgive that thought! the while  
Which made me both to weep and smile—  
I sometimes deem'd that it might be  
My brother's soul come down to me;  
But then at last away it flew,  
And then 't was mortal well I knew,  
For he would never thus have flown,  
And left me twice so doubly lone,  
Lone as the corse within its shroud,  
Lone as a solitary cloud,—

A single cloud on a sunny day,  
While all the rest of heaven is clear,  
A frown upon the atmosphere,  
That hath no business to appear

When skies are blue, and earth is gay. 299

A kind of change came in my fate,  
My keepers grew compassionate;  
I know not what had made them so,  
They were inured to sights of woe,  
But so it was:—my broken chain  
With links unfasten'd did remain,  
And it was liberty to stride  
Along my cell from side to side,  
And up and down, and then athwart,  
And tread it over every part;  
And round the pillars one by one,  
Returning where my walk begun,  
Avoiding only, as I trod,  
My brothers' graves without a sod;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

For if I thought with heedless tread  
My step profaned their lowly bed,  
My breath came gaspingly and thick,  
And my crush'd heart fell blind and sick. 317

I made a footing in the wall,  
It was not therefrom to escape,  
For I had buried one and all  
Who loved me in a human shape ;  
And the whole earth would henceforth be  
A wider prison unto me :  
No child, no sire, no kin had I,  
No partner in my misery ;  
I thought of this, and I was glad,  
For thought of them had made me mad ;  
But I was curious to ascend  
To my barr'd windows, and to bend  
Once more, upon the mountains high,  
The quiet of a loving eye. 331

I saw them, and they were the same,  
They were not changed like me in frame ;  
I saw their thousand years of snow  
On high—their wide long lake below,  
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow ;  
I heard the torrents leap and gush  
O'er channell'd rock and broken bush ;  
I saw the white-wall'd distant town,  
And whiter sails go skimming down ;  
And then there was a little isle,  
Which in my very face did smile,  
The only one in view ;

## The Prisoner of Chillon

A small green isle, it seem'd no more,  
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,  
But in it there were three tall trees,  
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,  
And by it there were waters flowing,  
And on it there were young flowers growing,  
Of gentle breath and hue.

The fish swam by the castle wall,  
And they seem'd joyous each and all;  
The eagle rode the rising blast,  
Methought he never flew so fast  
As then to me he seem'd to fly;  
And then new tears came in my eye,  
And I felt troubled—and would fain  
I had not left my recent chain;  
And when I did descend again,  
The darkness of my dim abode  
Fell on me as a heavy load;  
It was as is a new-dug grave,  
Closing o'er one we sought to save,—  
And yet my glance, too much opprest,  
Had almost need of such a rest.

365

It might be months, or years, or days,  
I kept no count, I took no note,  
I had no hope my eyes to raise,  
And clear them of their dreary mote;  
At last men came to set me free;  
I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where;  
It was at length the same to me,  
Fetter'd or fetterless to be,  
I learn'd to love despair.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And thus when they appear'd at last,  
And all my bonds aside were cast,  
These heavy walls to me had grown  
A hermitage—and all my own!  
And half I felt as they were come  
To tear me from a second home:  
With spiders I had friendship made,  
And watch'd them in their sullen trade,  
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,  
And why should I feel less than they?  
We were all inmates of one place,  
And I, the monarch of each race,  
Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell!  
In quiet we had learn'd to dwell;  
My very chains and I grew friends,  
So much a long communion tends  
To make us what we are:—even I  
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.

392

1816.

*Lord Byron.*

## MORTE D'ARTHUR

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd  
Among the mountains by the winter sea;  
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,  
Had fallen in Lyonesse about their lord,  
King Arthur: then, because his wound was  
deep,  
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,

## Morte d'Arthur

Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,  
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,  
A broken chancel with a broken cross,  
That stood on a dark strait of barren land. 10  
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one  
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
"The sequel of to-day unsolders all  
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights  
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep  
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we  
Shall never more, at any future time,  
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,  
Walking about the gardens and the halls 20  
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.  
I perish by this people which I made,—  
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again  
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,  
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm  
That without help I cannot last till morn.  
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,  
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest  
how  
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm  
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake, 30  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across  
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;  
And, wheresoever I am sung or told  
In aftertime, this also shall be known:  
But now delay not: take Excalibur,  
And fling him far into the middle mere:

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Watch what thou seëst, and lightly bring me word."

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:  
"It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus, 40  
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.  
A little thing may harm a wounded man.  
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,  
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept  
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,  
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,  
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang  
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping  
down

By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock, 50  
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,  
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,  
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran  
forth

And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt;  
For all the haft twinkled with diamond  
sparks

Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth work  
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long  
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,  
This way and that dividing the swift mind, 60  
In act to throw; but at the last it seem'd  
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd  
There in the many-knotted water-flags,  
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.

## Morte d'Arthur

So strode he back slow to the wounded king.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
"Hast thou perform'd my mission which I  
gave?"

What is it thou hast seen, or what hast  
heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, 70  
And the wild water lapping on the crag."

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and  
pale:

"Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,  
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd  
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight;  
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,  
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.  
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.  
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again  
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing 80  
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me  
word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time  
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,  
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;  
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,  
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote  
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

"And if indeed I cast the brand away,  
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,  
Should thus be lost forever from the earth, 90  
Which might have pleased the eyes of many  
men.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

What good should follow this, if this were  
done?

What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,  
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.

Were it well to obey then, if a king demand  
An act unprofitable, against himself?

The King is sick, and knows not what he does.

What record, or what relic of my lord

Should be to aftertime, but empty breath

And rumors of a doubt? but were this  
kept,

100

Stored in some treasure-house of mighty  
kings,

Some one might show it at a joust of arms,  
Saying, 'King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,

Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.

Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the  
deeps

Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'

So might some old man speak in the aftertime  
To all the people, winning reverence.

But now much honour and much fame were  
lost."

So spake he, clouded with his own con-  
ceit,

110

And hid Excalibur the second time,  
And so strode back slow to the wounded  
king.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:  
"What is it thou hast seen? or what hast  
heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:

## Morte d'Arthur

“I heard the water lapping on the crag,  
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.”

To whom replied King Arthur, much in  
wrath :

“Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,  
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me! 120  
Authority forgets a dying king,  
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye  
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,  
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights.  
In whom should meet the offices of all,  
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;  
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl  
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.  
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,  
And the third time may prosper, get thee  
hence: 130

But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,  
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.”

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,  
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged  
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the  
sword,

And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The  
great brand

Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,  
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd  
in an arch,

Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,  
Seen where the moving isles of winter

shock 140

By night, with noises of the northern sea.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:  
But ere he dipped the surface, rose an arm  
Cloth'd in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd  
    him

Three times, and drew him under in the mere,  
And lightly went the other to the king.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker  
breath:

“Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.  
Speak out; what is it thou hast heard, or  
    seen?”

150  
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
“Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems  
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,  
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,  
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,  
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling  
    him;

But when I look'd again, behold an arm,  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd  
    him

160  
Three times, and drew him under in the  
    mere.”

And answer made King Arthur, breathing  
hard:

“My end draws nigh; 't is time that I were  
    gone.

Make broad thy shoulders to receive my  
    weight,

## Morte d'Arthur

And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear  
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,  
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,  
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes  
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere 17c  
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,  
And would have spoken, but he found not  
words ;

Then took with care, and kneeling on one  
knee,

O'er both his shoulders drew the languid  
hands,  
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs  
But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted  
hard,

Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed  
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the  
king,

Muttering and murmuring at his ear, " Quick,  
quick !

I fear it is too late, and I shall die." 180  
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to  
ridge,

Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he  
walk'd,

Larger than human on the frozen hills.  
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry  
Before. His own thought drove him, like a  
goad.

Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves  
And barren chasms, and all to left and right

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he  
based —

His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang  
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed  
heels —

190

And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,  
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky  
barge,

Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,  
Beneath them ; and descending they were ware  
That all the decks were dense with stately  
forms

Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream —  
by these

Three Queens with crowns of gold — and  
from them rose

A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,  
And, as it were one voice, an agony  
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills  
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,  
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, " Place me in the  
barge,"

And to the barge they came. There those  
three Queens

Put forth their hands, and took the king, and  
wept.

But she that rose the tallest of them all  
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,  
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed  
his hands,

## Morte d'Arthur

And call'd him by his name, complaining  
loud, 210

And dropping bitter tears against his brow  
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was  
white

And colourless, and like the wither'd moon  
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing  
east;

And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with  
drops

Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—  
That made his forehead like a rising sun  
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd  
with dust;

Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,  
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed  
his lips. 220

So like a shatter'd column lay the king;  
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,  
From spur to plume a star of tournament,  
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged  
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:  
"Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?  
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?  
For now I see the true old times are dead,  
When every morning brought a noble  
chance, 230

And every chance brought out a noble knight.  
Such times have been not since the light that  
led

The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved  
Which was an image of the mighty world;  
And I, the last, go forth companionless,  
And the days darken round me, and the years,  
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the  
barge:

"The old order changeth, yielding place to  
new, 240  
And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the  
world.

Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?  
I have lived my life, and that which I have  
done

May He within himself make pure! but thou,  
If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought  
by prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let  
thy voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or  
goats 250

That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them  
friend?

For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.  
But now farewell. I am going a long way  
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—

## Ginevra

(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)  
To the island-valley of Avilion;  
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, <sup>260</sup>  
Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies  
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-  
lawns

And bowery hollows crown'd with summer  
sea, <sup>1835. 1842. 1869.</sup>

Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail  
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted  
swan <sup>1835. 1842. 1869.</sup>

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,  
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the  
flood

With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere  
Revolving many memories, till the hull <sup>270</sup>  
Look'd one black dot against the verge of  
dawn,

And on the mere the wailing died away.

1835. 1842. 1869. <sup>1835. 1842. 1869.</sup> *Lord Tennyson.*

## GINEVRA

From *Italy*

If thou shouldst ever come by choice or  
chance

To Modena, where still religiously  
Among her ancient trophies is preserved  
Bologna's bucket (in its chain it hangs

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Within that reverend tower, the Guirlandine),  
Stop at a palace near the Reggio gate,  
Dwelt in of old by one of the Orsini.  
Its noble gardens, terrace above terrace,  
And rich in fountains, statues, cypresses,  
Will long detain thee; through their archèd  
walks,

Dim at noonday, discovering many a glimpse  
Of knights and dames, such as in old romance,  
And lovers, such as in heroic song,  
Perhaps the two, for groves were their delight,  
That in the spring-time, as alone they sate,  
Venturing together on a tale of love,  
Read only part that day.—A summer sun  
Sets ere one half is seen; but ere thou go,  
Enter the house—prythee, forget it not—  
And look awhile upon a picture there. 20

'T is of a lady in her earliest youth,  
The last of that illustrious race,  
Done by Zampieri—but by whom I care not.  
He who observes it, ere he passes on,  
Gazes his fill, and comes and comes again,  
That he may call it up when far away. 26

She sits inclining forward as to speak,  
Her lips half open, and her finger up,  
As though she said "Beware!" her vest of gold  
Broidered with flowers, and clasped from head  
to foot,  
An emerald-stone in every golden clasp;  
And on her brow, fairer than alabaster,

## Ginevra

A coronet of pearls. But then her face,  
So lovely, yet so arch, so full of mirth,  
The overflowings of an innocent heart,—  
It haunts me still, though many a year has fled,  
Like some wild melody !

### Alone it hangs

Over a mouldering heirloom, its companion.  
An oaken chest, half-eaten by the worm,  
But richly carved by Antony of Trent  
With Scripture stories from the life of Christ;  
A chest that came from Venice, and had held  
The ducal robes of some old Ancestor,  
That, by the way—it may be true or false—  
But don't forget the picture; and thou wilt not  
When thou hast heard the tale they told me  
there.

46

She was an only child; from infancy  
The joy, the pride, of an indulgent Sire;  
Her Mother dying of the gift she gave,  
That precious gift, what else remained to him?  
The young Ginevra was his all in life,  
Still as she grew, for ever in his sight;  
And in her fifteenth year became a bride,  
Marrying an only son, Francesco Doria,  
Her playmate from her birth, and her first  
love.

55

Just as she looks there in her bridal dress,  
She was all gentleness, all gayety,  
Her pranks the favorite theme of every tongue.  
But now the day was come, the day, the hour;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Now, frowning, smiling, for the hundredth time,  
The nurse, that ancient lady, preached decorum;  
And, in the lustre of her youth, she gave  
Her hand, with her heart in it, to Francesco. 63

Great was the joy; but at the Bridal feast,  
When all sate down, the Bride was wanting  
there,  
Nor was she to be found! Her Father cried,  
" 'T is but to make a trial of our love!"  
And filled his glass to all; but his hand shook,  
And soon from guest to guest the panic spread.  
'T was but that instant she had left Francesco,  
Laughing and looking back, and flying still,  
Her ivory tooth imprinted on his finger.  
But now, alas, she was not to be found;  
Nor from that hour could anything be guessed,  
But that she was not!

Weary of his life,  
Francesco flew to Venice, and, forthwith,  
Flung it away in battle with the Turk.  
Orsini lived,—and long was to be seen  
An old man wandering as in quest of something,  
Something he could not find,—he knew not  
what.

When he was gone, the house remained awhile  
Silent and tenantless,—then went to  
strangers.

82

Full fifty years were past, and all forgot,  
When, on an idle day, a day of search  
Mid the old lumber in the Gallery,

## Maud Muller

That mouldering chest was noticed; and 't was  
    said By one as young, as thoughtless as Ginevra,  
"Why not remove it from its lurking place?"  
'T was done as soon as said; but on the way  
It burst, it fell; and lo, a skeleton,  
With here and there a pearl, an emerald-stone,  
A golden clasp, clasping a shred of gold!  
All else had perished,—save a nuptial-ring,  
And a small seal, her mother's legacy,  
Engraven with a name, the name of both,  
"GINEVRA."

95

There then had she found a grave!  
Within that chest had she concealed herself,  
Fluttering with joy, the happiest of the happy;  
When a spring-lock, that lay in ambush there,  
Fastened her down for ever!

100

*Samuel Rogers.*

1822.

## MAUD MULLER

MAUD MULLER, on a summer's day,  
Raked the meadow sweet with hay.

Beneath her torn hat glowed the wealth  
Of simple beauty and rustic health.

Singing, she wrought, and her merry glee      5  
The mock-bird echoed from his tree.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

But, when she glanced to the far-off town,  
White from its hill-slope looking down,

The sweet song died, and a vague unrest  
And a nameless longing filled her breast,— 10

A wish, that she hardly dared to own,  
For something better than she had known.

The Judge rode slowly down the lane,  
Smoothing his horse's chestnut mane.

He drew his bridle in the shade 15  
Of the apple-trees, to greet the maid,

And ask a draught from the spring that flowed  
Through the meadow across the road.

She stooped where the cool spring bubbled up,  
And filled for him her small tin cup, 20

And blushed as she gave it, looking down  
On her feet so bare, and her tattered gown.

“Thanks!” said the Judge; “a sweeter draught  
From fairer hand was never quaffed.”

He spoke of the grass and flowers and trees, 25  
Of the singing birds and the humming bees;

Then talked of the haying, and wondered  
whether  
The cloud in the west would bring foul weather.

## Maud Muller

And Maud forgot her brier-torn gown,  
And her graceful ankles, bare and brown; 30

And listened, while a pleased surprise  
Looked from her long-lashed hazel eyes.

At last, like one who for delay  
Seeks a vain excuse, he rode away.

Maud Muller looked and sighed: "Ah me! 35  
That I the Judge's bride might be!

"He would dress me up in silks so fine,  
And praise and toast me at his wine.

"My father should wear a broadcloth coat,  
My brother should sail a painted boat. 40

"I'd dress my mother so grand and gay,  
And the baby should have a new toy each day.

"And I'd feed the hungry and clothe the poor,  
And all should bless me who left our door."

The Judge looked back as he climbed the hill, 45  
And saw Maud Muller standing still:

"A form more fair, a face more sweet,  
Ne'er hath it been my lot to meet.

"And her modest answer and graceful air  
Show her wise and good as she is fair. 50

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

“Would she were mine, and I to-day,  
Like her, a harvester of hay;

“No doubtful balance of rights and wrongs,  
Nor weary lawyers with endless tongues,

“But low of cattle and song of birds,  
And health and quiet and loving words.”

55

But he thought of his sisters, proud and cold,  
And his mother, vain of her rank and gold.

So, closing his heart, the Judge rode on,  
And Maud was left in the field alone.

60

But the lawyers smiled that afternoon,  
When he hummed in court an old love-tune;

And the young girl mused beside the well,  
Till the rain on the unraked clover fell.

He wedded a wife of richest dower,  
Who lived for fashion, as he for power.

65

Yet oft, in his marble hearth's bright glow,  
He watched a picture come and go;

And sweet Maud Muller's hazel eyes  
Looked out in their innocent surprise.

70

Oft, when the wine in his glass was red,  
He longed for the wayside well instead;

## Maud Muller 3-1

And closed his eyes on his garnished rooms  
To dream of meadows and clover-blooms.

And the proud man sighed with a secret pain, 75  
"Ah, that I were free again!"

"Free as when I rode that day,  
Where the barefoot maiden raked her hay."

She wedded a man unlearned and poor,  
And many children played round her door. 80

But care and sorrow, and child-birth pain,  
Left their traces on heart and brain.

And oft, when the summer sun shone hot  
On the new-mown hay in the meadow lot,

And she heard the little spring brook fall 85  
Over the roadside, through the wall,

In the shade of the apple-tree again  
She saw a rider draw his rein;

And, gazing down with timid grace,  
She felt his pleased eyes read her face. 90

Sometimes her narrow kitchen walls  
Stretched away into stately halls;

The weary wheel to a spinnet turned,  
The tallow candle an astral burned;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And for him who sat by the chimney lug, 95  
Dozing and grumbling o'er pipe and mug,

A manly form at her side she saw,  
And joy was duty and love was law.

Then she took up her burden of life again,  
Saying only, "It might have been." 100

Alas for maiden, alas for judge,  
For rich repiner and household drudge!

God pity them both! and pity us all,  
Who vainly the dreams of youth recall.

For of all sad words of tongue or pen, 105  
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"

Ah, well! for us all some sweet hope lies  
Deeply buried from human eyes;

And, in the hereafter, angels may  
Roll the stone from its grave away! 110

1854. *John Greenleaf Whittier.*

## AUX ITALIENS

AT Paris it was, at the opera there;—

And she looked like a queen in a book that  
night,

With the wreath of pearl in her raven hair,  
And the brooch on her breast so bright. 4

## Aux Italiens

Of all the operas that Verdi wrote,  
The best, to my taste, is the *Trovatore*;  
And Mario can soothe, with a tenor note,  
The souls in purgatory. 8

The moon on the tower slept soft as snow;  
And who was not thrilled in the strangest  
way,  
As we heard him sing, while the gas burned  
low,  
“*Non ti scordar di me*”? 12

The emperor there, in his box of state,  
Looked grave, as if he had just then seen  
The red flag wave from the city gate,  
Where his eagles in bronze had been. 16

The empress, too, had a tear in her eye:  
You’d have said that her fancy had gone  
back again,  
For one moment, under the old blue sky,  
To the old glad life in Spain. 20

Well! there in our front-row box we sat,  
Together, my bride-betrothed and I;  
My gaze was fixed on my opera-hat,  
And hers on the stage hard by. 24

And both were silent, and both were sad;—  
Like a queen she leaned on her full white  
arm,  
With that regal, indolent air she had;  
So confident of her charm! 28

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

I have not a doubt she was thinking then  
Of her former lord, good soul that he was!  
Who died the richest and roundest of men,  
The Marquis of Carabas. 32

I hope that, to get to the kingdom of heaven,  
Through a needle's eye he had not to pass;  
I wish him well for the jointure given  
To my lady of Carabas. 36

Meanwhile, I was thinking of my first love,  
As I had not been thinking of aught for  
years;  
Till over my eyes there began to move  
Something that felt like tears. 40

I thought of the dress that she wore last time,  
When we stood 'neath the cypress-trees  
together,  
In that lost land, in that soft clime,  
In the crimson evening weather; 44

Of that muslin dress (for the eve was hot)  
And her warm white neck in its golden  
chain;  
And her full soft hair, just tied in a knot,  
And falling loose again; 48

And the jasmin-flower in her fair young  
breast;  
(O the faint, sweet smell of that jasmin-  
flower!)

## Aux Italiens

And the one bird singing alone to his nest;

And the one star over the tower.

52

I thought of our little quarrels and strife,  
And the letter that brought me back my  
ring;

And it all seemed then, in the waste of life,  
Such a very little thing!

56

For I thought of her grave below the hill,  
Which the sentinel cypress-tree stands over:  
And I thought . . . "were she only living still,  
How I could forgive her and love her!"

60  
And I swear, as I thought of her thus, in that  
hour,  
And of how, after all, old things are best,  
That I smelt the smell of that jasmin-flower  
Which she used to wear in her breast.

64

It smelt so faint, and it smelt so sweet,  
It made me creep, and it made me cold!  
Like the scent that steals from the crumbling  
sheet  
Where a mummy is half unrolled.

68

And I turned and looked: she was sitting  
there,  
In a dim box over the stage; and drest  
In that muslin dress, with that full soft hair,  
And that jasmin in her breast!

72

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

I was here; and she was there;  
And the glittering horseshoe curved be-  
tween!—

From my bride-betrothed, with her raven  
hair,  
And her sumptuous scornful mien,      76

To my early love with her eyes downcast,  
And over her primrose face the shade,  
(In short from the future back to the past)  
There was but a step to be made.      80

To my early love from my future bride  
One moment I looked. Then I stole to the  
door,  
I traversed the passage; and down at her side  
I was sitting, a moment more.      84

My thinking of her, or the music's strain,  
Or something which never will be exprest,  
Had brought her back from the grave again,  
With the jasmin in her breast.      88

She is not dead, and she is not wed!  
But she loves me now, and she loved me  
then!  
And the very first word that her sweet lips  
said,  
My heart grew youthful again.      92

The marchioness there, of Carabas,  
She is wealthy, and young, and handsome  
still;

## Aux Italiens

And but for her—well, we 'll let that pass;  
She may marry whomever she will. 96

But I will marry my own first love,  
With her primrose face: for old things are  
best;  
And the flower in her bosom, I prize it above  
The brooch in my lady's breast. 100

The world is filled with folly and sin,  
And love must cling where it can, I say:  
For beauty is easy enough to win;  
But one is n't loved every day. 104

And I think, in the lives of most women and  
men,  
There's a moment when all would go  
smooth and even,  
If only the dead could find out when  
To come back and be forgiven. 108

But O, the smell of that jasmin-flower!  
And O that music! and O the way  
That voice rang out from the donjon tower,  
*Non ti scordar di me,*  
*Non ti scordar di me!* 113

1859.

*The Earl of Lytton*  
(*Owen Meredith*).

## THE COURTIN'

God makes sech nights, all white an' still  
Fur 'z you can look or listen;  
Moonshine an' snow on field an' hill,  
All silence an' all glisten. 4

Zekle crep' up quite unbeknown  
An' peeked in thru' the winder,  
An' there sot Huldy all alone,  
'Ith no one nigh to hender. 8

A fireplace filled the room's one side,  
With half a cord o' wood in—  
There warn't no stoves (tell comfort died)  
To bake ye to a puddin'. 12

The wa'nut logs shot sparkles out  
Towards the pootiest, bless her!  
An' leetle flames danced all about  
The chiny on the dresser. 16

Agin the chimbley crook-necks hung,  
An' in amongst 'em rusted  
The ole queen's-arm thet gran'ther Young  
Fetched back f'om Concord busted. 20

## The Courtin'

The very room, coz she was in,  
Seemed warm f'om floor to ceilin',  
An' she looked full ez rosy agin  
Ez the apples she was peelin'. 24

'T was kin' o' kingdom-come to look  
On sech a blessed cretur,  
A dogrose blushin' to a brook  
Ain't modester nor sweeter. 28

He was six foot o' man, A 1,  
Clear grit an' human natur';  
None could n't quicker pitch a ton,  
Nor dror a furrer straighter. 32

He'd sparked it with full twenty gals,  
He'd squired 'em, danced 'em, druv 'em,  
Fust this one, an' then thet, by spells—  
All is, he could n't love 'em. 36

But long o' her his veins 'ould run  
All crinkly like curled maple,  
The side she bresched felt full o' sun  
Ez a south slope in Ap'il. 40

She thought no v'ice hed sech a swing  
Ez hisn in the choir;  
My! when he made Ole Hunderd ring,  
She *knowed* the Lord was nigher. 44

An' she 'd blush scarlit, right in prayer,  
When her new meetin'-bunnet

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Felt somehow thru' its crown a pair  
O' blue eyes sot upun it.

48

Thet night, I tell ye, she looked *some!*  
She seemed to 've gut a new soul,  
For she felt sartin-sure he 'd come,  
Down to her very shoe-sole.

52

She heered a foot, an' knowed it tu,  
A-raspin' on the scraper,—  
All ways to once her feelins flew  
Like sparks in burnt-up paper.

56

He kin' o' l'itered on the mat,  
Some doubtfle o' the sekle,  
His heart kep' goin' pity-pat,  
But hern went pity Zekle.

60

An' yit she gin her cheer a jerk  
Ez though she wished him furder,  
An' on her apples kep' to work,  
Parin' away like murder.

64

“ You want to see my Pa, I s'pose? ”  
“ Wal . . . no . . . I come dasignin' ”—  
“ To see my Ma? She 's sprinklin' clo'es  
Agin to-morrer's i'nin'.”

68

To say why gals acts so or so,  
Or don't, 'ould be persumin';  
Mebby to mean *yes* an' say *no*  
Comes nateral to women.

72

## The Courtin'

He stood a spell on one foot fust,  
Then stood a spell on t'other,  
An' on which one he felt the wust  
He could n't ha' told ye nuther.

76

Says he, "I 'd better call agin ;"  
Says she, "Think likely, Mister :"  
Thet last word pricked him like a pin,  
An' . . . Wal, he up an' kist her.

80

When Ma bimeby upon 'em slips,  
Huldy sot pale ez ashes,  
All kin' o' smily roun' the lips  
An' teary roun' the lashes.

84

For she was jes' the quiet kind  
Whose naturs never vary,  
Like streams that keep a summer mind  
Snowhid in Jenooary.

88

The blood clost roun' her heart felt glued  
Too tight for all expressin',  
Tell mother see how metters stood.  
An' gin 'em both her blessin.'

92

Then her red come back like the tide  
Down to the Bay o' Fundy,  
An' all I know is they was cried  
In meetin' come nex' Sunday.

96

1848. 1862.

James Russell Lowell.

## PLAIN LANGUAGE FROM TRUTHFUL JAMES

POPULARLY KNOWN AS THE "HEATHEN  
CHINEE"

WHICH I wish to remark—

And my language is plain—  
That for ways that are dark  
And for tricks that are vain,  
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,  
Which the same I would rise to explain. \*

Ah Sin was his name;

And I shall not deny  
In regard to the same  
What that name might imply;  
But his smile it was pensive and childlike,  
As I frequent remarked to Bill Nye. 12.

It was August the third,

And quite soft was the skies;  
Which it might be inferred  
That Ah Sin was likewise;  
Yet he played it that day upon William  
And me in a way I despise. 13.

## Plain Language from Truthful James

Which we had a small game,  
And Ah Sin took a hand:  
It was Euchre. The same  
He did not understand;  
But he smiled, as he sat by the table,  
With the smile that was childlike and  
bland. 24

Yet the cards they were stocked  
In a way that I grieve,  
And my feelings were shocked  
At the state of Nye's sleeve,  
Which was stuffed full of aces and bowers,  
And the same with intent to deceive. 30

But the hands that were played  
By that heathen Chinee,  
And the points that he made,  
Were quite frightful to see,—  
Till at last he put down a right bower,  
Which the same Nye had dealt unto me. 36

Then I looked up at Nye,  
And he gazed upon me;  
And he rose with a sigh,  
And said, "Can this be?  
We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor,"—  
And he went for that heathen Chinee. 42

In the scene that ensued  
I did not take a hand,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

But the floor it was strewed  
Like the leaves on the strand  
With the cards that Ah Sin had been hiding,  
In the game "he did not understand." 48

In his sleeves, which were long,  
He had twenty-four packs,—  
Which was coming it strong,  
Yet I state but the facts;  
And we found on his nails, which were  
taper,—  
What is frequent in tapers,—that's  
wax. 54

Which is why I remark,  
And my language is plain,  
That for ways that are dark  
And for tricks that are vain,  
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,—  
Which the same I am free to maintain. 60

1870.

*Francis Bret Harte.*

### THE ONE-HOSS-SHAY

OR, THE DEACON'S MASTERPIECE

A LOGICAL STORY

HAVE you heard of the wonderful one-hoss-shay,  
That was built in such a logical way  
It ran a hundred years to a day,  
And then, of a sudden, it—ah, but stay,

## The One-Hoss-Shay

I 'll tell you what happened without delay,  
Scaring the parson into fits,  
Frightening people out of their wits,—  
Have you ever heard of that, I say?

8

Seventeen hundred and fifty-five,  
*Georgius Secundus* was then alive,—  
Snuffy old drone from the German hive:  
That was the year when Lisbon-town  
Saw the earth open and gulp her down,  
And Braddock's army was done so brown,  
Left without a scalp to its crown.  
It was on the terrible Earthquake-day  
That the Deacon finished the one-hoss-shay. 17

Now in building of chaises, I tell you what,  
There is always *somewhere* a weakest spot,—  
In hub, tire, felloe, in spring or thill,  
In panel, or crossbar, or floor, or sill,  
In screw, bolt, thoroughbrace,—lurking still,  
Find it somewhere you must and will,—  
Above or below, or within or without,—  
And that 's the reason, beyond a doubt,  
A chaise *breaks down*, but does n't *wear out*. 26

But the Deacon swore (as Deacons do,  
With an "I dew yum," or an "I tell *yeou*,")  
He would build one shay to beat the taown  
'n' the keounty 'n' all the kentry raoun';  
It should be so built that it *could n'* break  
daown;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

—“Fur,” said the Deacon, “ ‘t ’s mighty plain  
Thut the weakes’ place mus’ stan’ the strain ;  
'n' the way t’ fix it, uz I maintain,  
Is only jest  
T’ make that place uz strong uz the rest.”

36

So the Deacon inquired of the village folk  
Where he could find the strongest oak,  
That could n’t be split nor bent nor broke,—  
That was for spokes and floor and sills ;  
He sent for lancewood to make the thills ;  
The crossbars were ash, from the straightest trees ;  
The panels of whitewood, that cuts like cheese,  
But lasts like iron for things like these ;  
The hubs of logs from the “ Settler’s ellum,”—  
Last of its timber,—they could n’t sell ’em,  
Never an axe had seen their chips,  
And the wedges flew from between their lips,  
Their blunt ends frizzled like celery-tips ;  
Step and prop-iron, bolt and screw,  
Spring, tire, axle, and lynchpin too,  
Steel of the finest, bright and blue ;  
Thoroughbrace bison-skin, thick and wide ;  
Boot, top, dasher, from tough old hide  
Found in the pit when the tanner died.  
That was the way he “ put her through.”  
“ There ! ” said the Deacon, “ naow she ’ll  
dew ! ”

57

## The One-Hoss-Shay

Do! I tell you, I rather guess  
She was a wonder, and nothing less!  
Colts grew horses, beards turned gray,  
Deacon and deaconess dropped away,  
Children and grandchildren,—where were they?  
But there stood the stout old one-hoss-shay  
As fresh as on Lisbon-earthquake-day! 64

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED;—it came and found  
The Deacon's Masterpiece strong and sound.  
Eighteen hundred increased by ten;—  
“Hahnsum kerridge” they called it then.  
Eighteen hundred and twenty came;—  
Running as usual; much the same.  
Thirty and forty at last arrive,  
And then came fifty, and FIFTY-FIVE. 72

Little of all we value here  
Wakes on the morn of its hundredth year  
Without both feeling and looking queer.  
In fact, there's nothing that keeps its youth,  
So far as I know, but a tree and truth.  
(This is a moral that runs at large;  
Take it.—You're welcome.—No extra  
charge.) 79

FIRST OF NOVEMBER,—the Earthquake day.—  
There are traces of age in the one-hoss-shay,  
A general flavor of mild decay,  
But nothing local as one may say.  
There could n't be,—for the Deacon's art  
Had made it so like in every part

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

That there was n't a chance for one to start.  
For the wheels were just as strong as the thills,  
And the floor was just as strong as the sills,  
And the panels just as strong as the floor,  
And the whippletree neither less nor more,  
And the back-crossbar as strong as the fore,  
And spring and axle and hub *encore*.  
And yet, *as a whole*, it is past a doubt  
In another hour it will be *worn out*!

94

First of November, 'Fifty-five!  
This morning the parson takes a drive.  
Now, small boys, get out of the way!  
Here comes the wonderful one-hoss-shay,  
Drawn by a rat-tailed, ewe-necked bay.  
"Huddup!" said the parson.—Off went they. 104

The parson was working his Sunday's text,—  
Had got to *fifthly*, and stopped perplexed  
At what the—Moses—was coming next.  
All at once the horse stood still,  
Close by the meet'n'-house on the hill.  
—First a shiver, and then a thrill,  
Then something decidedly like a spill,—  
And the parson was sitting upon a rock,  
At half past nine by the meet'n'-house clock,—  
Just the hour of the Earthquake shock!  
—What do you think the parson found,  
When he got up and stared around?  
The poor old chaise in a heap or mound,  
As if it had been to the mill and ground!  
You see, of course, if you're not a dunce,  
How it went to pieces all at once,—

# The Diverting History of John Gilpin

All at once, and nothing first,—  
Just as bubbles do when they burst. 118

End of the wonderful one-hoss-shay.  
Logic is logic. That's all I say. 120  
1858. *Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

## THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN

*Showing how he went farther than he intended,  
and came safe home again.*

JOHN GILPIN was a citizen  
Of credit and renown,  
A train-band captain eke was he  
Of famous London town. 4

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear,  
"Though wedded we have been  
These twice ten tedious years, yet we  
No holiday have seen. 8

"To-morrow is our wedding-day,  
And we will then repair  
Unto the Bell at Edmonton  
All in a chaise and pair. 12

"My sister and my sister's child,  
Myself, and children three,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Will fill the chaise; so you must ride  
On horseback after we." 16

He soon replied, "I do admire  
Of womankind but one,  
And you are she, my dearest dear,  
Therefore it shall be done. 20

"I am linen-draper bold,  
As all the world doth know,  
And my good friend the calender  
Will lend his horse to go." 24

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin, "That's well said;  
And for that wine is dear,  
We will be furnished with our own,  
Which is both bright and clear." 28

John Gilpin kissed his loving wife;  
O'erjoyed was he to find,  
That, though on pleasure she was bent,  
She had a frugal mind. 32

The morning came, the chaise was brought,  
But yet was not allowed  
To drive up to the door, lest all  
Should say that she was proud. 36

So three doors off the chaise was stayed,  
Where they did all get in;  
Six precious souls, and all agog  
To dash through thick and thin. 40

## The Diverting History of John Gilpin

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,  
Were never folks so glad,  
The stones did rattle underneath,  
As if Cheapside were mad. 44

John Gilpin at his horse's side  
Seized fast the flowing mane,  
And up he got, in haste to ride,  
But soon came down again; 48

For saddle-tree scarce reached had he,  
His journey to begin,  
When, turning round his head, he saw  
Three customers come in. 52

So down he came; for loss of time,  
Although it grieved him sore,  
Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,  
Would trouble him much more. 56

'T was long before the customers  
Were suited to their mind,  
When Betty screaming came down stairs,  
"The wine is left behind!" 60

"Good lack!" quoth he—"yet bring it me,  
My leathern belt likewise,  
In which I bear my trusty sword,  
When I do exercise." 64

Now Mistress Gilpin (careful soul!)  
Had two stone bottles found,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

To hold the liquor that she loved,  
And keep it safe and sound.

68

Each bottle had a curling ear,  
Through which the belt he drew,  
And hung a bottle on each side,  
To make his balance true.

72

Then over all, that he might be  
Equipped from top to toe,  
His long red cloak, well brushed and neat,  
He manfully did throw.

76

Now see him mounted once again  
Upon his nimble steed,  
Full slowly pacing o'er the stones,  
With caution and good heed.

80

But finding soon a smoother road  
Beneath his well-shod feet,  
The snorting beast began to trot,  
Which galled him in his seat.

84

So, "Fair and softly," John he cried,  
But John he cried in vain;  
That trot became a gallop soon,  
In spite of curb and rein.

88

So stooping down, as needs he must  
Who cannot sit upright,  
He grasped the mane with both his hands,  
And eke with all his might.

92

# The Diverting History of John Gilpin

His horse, who never in that sort  
Had handled been before,  
What thing upon his back had got  
Did wonder more and more.

96

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought;  
Away went hat and wig;  
He little dreamt, when he set out,  
Of running such a rig.

100

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,  
Like streamer long and gay,  
Till loop and button failing both,  
At last it flew away.

104

Then might all people well discern  
The bottles he has slung;  
A bottle swinging at each side,  
As hath been said or sung.

108

The dogs did bark, the children screamed,  
Up flew the windows all;  
And every soul cried out, "Well done!"  
As loud as he could bawl.

112

Away went Gilpin—who but he?  
His fame soon spread around;  
"He carries weight!" "He rides a race!"  
"T is for a thousand pound!"

116

And still, as fast as he drew near,  
'T was wonderful to view,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

How in a trice the turnpike-men  
Their gates wide open threw.

120

And now, as he went bowing down  
His reeking head full low,  
The bottles twain behind his back  
Were shattered at a blow.

124

Down ran the wine into the road,  
Most piteous to be seen,  
Which made his horse's flanks to smoke  
As they had basted been.

128

But still he seemed to carry weight,  
With leathern girdle braced;  
For all might see the bottle necks  
Still dangling at his waist.

132

Thus all through merry Islington  
These gambols he did play,  
Until he came unto the Wash  
Of Edmonton so gay;

136

And there he threw the Wash about  
On both sides of the way,  
Just like unto a trundling mop,  
Or a wild goose at play.

140

At Edmonton his loving wife  
From the balcony spied  
Her tender husband, wondering much  
To see how he did ride.

144

# The Diverting History of John Gilpin

“Stop, stop, John Gilpin!—Here’s the house!”

They all at once did cry;

“The dinner waits, and we are tired;”

Said Gilpin—“So am I!”

148

But yet his horse was not a whit

Inclined to tarry there;

For why?—his owner had a house

Full ten miles off, at Ware.

152

So like an arrow swift he flew,

Shot by an archer strong;

So did he fly—which brings me to

The middle of my song.

156

Away went Gilpin, out of breath,

And sore against his will,

Till at his friend’s the calender’s

His horse at last stood still.

160

The calender, amazed to see

His neighbour in such trim,

Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,

And thus accosted him:

164

“What news? what news? your tidings tell;

Tell me you must and shall—

Say why bareheaded you are come,

Or why you come at all?”

168

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,

And loved a timely joke;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And thus unto the calender

In merry guise he spoke:

172

“I came because your horse would come;  
And, if I well forebode,  
My hat and wig will soon be here,  
They are upon the road.”

176

The calender, right glad to find  
His friend in merry pin,  
Returned him not a single word,  
But to the house went in;

180

Whence straight he came with hat and wig;  
A wig that flowed behind,  
A hat not much the worse for wear,  
Each comely in its kind.

184

He held them up, and in his turn  
Thus showed his ready wit,  
“My head is twice as big as yours,  
They therefore needs must fit.

188

“But let me scrape the dirt away  
That hangs upon your face;  
And stop and eat, for well you may  
Be in a hungry case.”

192

Said John, “It is my wedding-day,  
And all the world would stare,  
If wife should dine at Edmonton,  
And I should dine at Ware.”

196

## The Diverting History of John Gilpin

So turning to his horse, he said,

“ I am in haste to dine ;

‘ T was for your pleasure you come here,

You shall go back for mine.”

209

Ah, luckless speech, and bootless boast !

For which he paid full dear ;

For, while he spake, a braying ass

Did sing most loud and clear ;

204

Whereat his horse did snort, as he

Had heard a lion roar,

And galloped off with all his might,

As he had done before.

208

Away went Gilpin, and away

Went Gilpin’s hat and wig :

He lost them sooner than at first ;

For why ?—they were too big.

212

Now Mrs. Gilpin, when she saw

Her husband posting down

Into the country far away,

She pulled out half-a-crown ;

216

And thus unto the youth, she said,

That drove them to the Bell,

“ This shall be yours, when you bring back

My husband safe and well.”

220

The youth did ride, and soon did meet

John coming back amain ;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Whom in a trice he tried to stop,  
By catching at his rein;

224

But not performing what he meant,  
And gladly would have done,  
The frightened steed he frightened more,  
And made him faster run.

228

Away went Gilpin, and away  
Went postboy at his heels,  
The postboy's horse right glad to miss  
The lumbering of the wheels.

232

Six gentlemen upon the road,  
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,  
With postboy scampering in the rear,  
They raised the hue and cry:—

236

“Stop thief! stop thief!—a highwayman!”  
Not one of them was mute;  
And all and each that passed that way  
Did join in the pursuit.

240

And now the turnpike gates again  
Flew open in short space;  
The toll-men thinking, as before,  
That Gilpin rode a race.

244

And so he did, and won it too,  
For he got first to town;  
Nor stopped till where he had got up  
He did again get down.

248

## The Laird o' Cockpen

Now let us sing, Long live the king!

And Gilpin long live he;

And, when he next doth ride abroad,

May I be there to see!

252

1785.

William Cowper.

## THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN

THE Laird o' Cockpen, he's proud an' he's  
great,

His mind is ta'en up wi' the things o' the state;

He wanted a wife his braw house to keep,

But favor wi' wooin' was fashious to seek.

4

Down by the dyke-side a lady did dwell,  
At his table-head he thought she'd look well;  
McClish's ae daughter o' Claverse-ha' Lee,  
A penniless lass wi' a lang pedigree.

8

His wig was weel pouthered, and guid as new;  
His waistcoat was white, his coat it was blue;  
He put on a ring, a sword, and cocked hat,—  
And wha could refuse the Laird wi' a' that?

12

He took the gray mare, and rade cannilie,—  
And rapped at the yett o' Claverse-ha' Lee;  
"Gae tell Mistress Jean to come speedily ben:  
She's wanted to speak to the Laird o'  
Cockpen."

16

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Mistress Jean was makin' the elder-flower wine;  
“An’ what brings the Laird at sic a like time?”  
She put aff her apron, and on her silk gown,  
Her mutch wi’ red ribbons, and gaed awa’  
down.

20

An’ when she cam ben, he bowed fu’ low,  
An’ what was his errand he soon let her know.  
Amazed was the Laird when the lady said,  
“Na”;  
And wi’ a laigh curtsie she turnèd awa.

24

Dumfounded he was, but nae sigh did he gie;  
He mounted his mare—he rade cannilie,  
And aften he thought, as he gaed through the  
glen,  
‘She’s daft to refuse the Laird o’ Cockpen.’

28

[And now that the Laird his exit has made,  
Mistress Jean she reflected on what she had  
said;  
“Oh! for ane I’ll get better, it’s waur I’ll get ten;  
I was daft to refuse the Laird o’ Cockpen.”

32

Next time that the Laird and the lady were  
seen,  
They were gaun arm-in-arm to the kirk on the  
green;  
Now she sits in the ha’ like a weel-tappit hen,  
But as yet there’s nae chickens appeared at  
Cockpen.]

36

1822-4?

*Carolina Oliphant (Baroness Nairne).*



THE BIRTHPLACE OF ROBERT BURNS, AYR, SCOTLAND



## TAM O'SHANTER

### A TALE

Of Brownyis and of Bogillis full is this Buke.  
GAWIN DOUGLASS.

WHEN chapman billies leave the street,  
And drouthy neebors neebors meet ;  
As market-days are wearing late,  
An' folk begin to tak the gate ;  
While we sit bousing at the nappy,  
An' getting fou and unco happy,  
We think na on the lang Scots miles,  
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,  
That lie between us and our hame,  
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame, 10  
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam O'Shanter,  
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter :  
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,  
For honest men and bonnie lasses).

O Tam, hadst thou been but sae wise,  
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice !  
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,  
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum ; 20

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

That frae November till October,  
Ae market-day thou was nae sober ;  
That ilka melder, wi' the miller,  
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller ;  
That every naig was ca'd a shoe on,  
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on ;  
That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,  
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.  
She prophesied that, late or soon,  
Thou would be found deep drowned in  
Doon ; ..

36

Or catched wi' warlocks in the mirk,  
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames ! it gars me greet  
To think how monie counsels sweet,  
How monie lengthened sage advices,  
The husband frae the wife despises !

But to our tale : Ae market-night  
Tam had got planted unco right,  
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,  
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely ; 40  
And at his elbow souter Johnie,  
His ancient, trusty, drouthy cronie.  
Tam lo'ed him like a very brither ;  
They had been fou for weeks thegither.  
The night drove on wi' sangs and clatter,  
And aye the ale was growing better ;  
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,  
Wi' secret favours, sweet and precious ;  
The Souter tauld his queerest stories ;  
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus ;  
The storm without might rair and rustle,  
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

50

50

## Tam O'Shanter

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,  
E'en drowned himself amang the nappy.  
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,  
The minutes winged their way wi' pleasure;  
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,  
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious.

But pleasures are like poppies spread;  
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed; 60  
Or like the snow falls in the river,  
A moment white,—then melts forever;  
Or like the borealis race,  
That flit ere you can point their place;  
Or like the rainbow's lovely form  
Evanishing amid the storm.  
Nae man can tether time or tide;  
The hour approaches Tam maun ride;  
That hour o' night's black arch the key-  
stane,  
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in; 70  
And sic a night he taks the road in,  
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 't wad blawn its last;  
The rattling showers rose on the blast;  
The speedy gleams the darkness swallowed;  
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellowed:  
That night a child might understand,  
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare Meg,  
A better never lifted leg, 80  
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,  
Despising wind and rain and fire,—  
Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet,  
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet.

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Whiles glowering round wi' prudent cares,  
Lest bogles catch him unawares;  
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,  
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.

By this time he was cross the ford,  
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoored; 96  
And past the birks and meikle stane,  
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;  
And through the whins, and by the cairn,  
Whare hunters fand the murdered bairn;  
And near the thorn, aboon the well,  
Whare Mungo's mither hanged hersel.  
Before him Doon pours all his floods;  
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;  
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;  
Near and more near the thunders roll: 100  
When, glimmering through the groaning trees,  
Kirk-Alloway seemed in a breeze!  
Through ilka bore the beams were glancing,  
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!  
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!  
Wi' tippenny we fear nae evil;  
Wi' usquabae we'll face the Devil!—  
The swats sae reamed in Tammie's noddle,  
Fair play, he cared na Deils a boddle. 110  
But Maggie stood right sair astonished,  
Till, by the heel and hand admonished,  
She ventured forward on the light;  
And, vow! Tam saw an unco sight!  
Warlocks and witches in a dance:  
Nae cotillion brent new frae France,

## Tam O'Shanter

But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels  
Put life and mettle in their heels.  
A winnock-bunker in the east,  
There sat Auld Nick, in shape o' beast,— 120  
A tosie tyke, black, grim, and large,—  
To gie them music was his charge ;  
He screwed the pipes and gart them skirl  
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.  
Coffins stood round like open presses,  
That shawed the dead in their last dresses ;  
And by some devilish cantraip sleight,  
Each in its cauld hand held a light,—  
By which heroic Tam was able  
To note, upon the haly table, 130  
A murderer's banes, in gibbet-airns ;  
Twa span-long, wee, unchristened bairns ;  
A thief new-cutted frae a rape,  
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape ;  
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted ;  
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted ;  
A garter, which a babe had strangled ;  
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,—  
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,—  
The grey-hairs yet stack to the heft ; 140  
Three lawyers' tongues turned inside out,  
Wi' lies seamed like a beggar's clout ;  
And priests' hearts, rotten, black as muck,  
Lay stinking, vile, in every neuk :  
Wi' mair of horrible and awefu',  
Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowered, amazed and curious,  
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious ;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The piper loud and louder blew;  
The dancers quick and quicker flew;      150  
They reeled, they set, they crossed, they cleikit,  
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,  
And coost heruddies to the wark,  
And linket at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,  
A' plump and strapping in their teens:  
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,  
Been snaw-white seventeen-hunder linen;  
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,  
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,      160  
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies  
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!

But withered beldames, auld and droll,  
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,  
Lowping an' flinging on a crummock,—  
I wonder did na turn thy stomach.

But Tam kenn'd what was what fu' brawlie:  
There was ae winsome wench and wawlie,  
That night inlisted in the core,  
Lang after kend on Carrick shore      170  
(For monie a beast to dead she shot,  
And perished monie a bonnie boat,  
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,  
And kept the country-side in fear).  
Her cutty-sark o' Paisley harn,  
That while a lassie she had worn,  
In longitude though sorely scanty,  
It was her best, and she was vaunty.—  
Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie  
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,      180

## Tam O'Shanter

Wi' twa pund Scots ('t was a' her riches),  
Wad ever graced a dance of witches!

But here my Muse her wing maun cour,  
Sic flights are far beyond her power;  
To sing how Nannie lap and flang  
(A souple jade she was and strang),  
And how Tam stood like ane bewitched,  
And thought his very een enriched.  
Even Satan glowered, and fidged fu' fain,  
And hotched and blew wi' might and

main; 190

Till first ae caper, syne anither,—  
Tam tint his reason a' thegither,  
And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty-sark!"  
And in an instant all was dark;  
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,  
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,  
When plundering herds assail their byke;  
As open pussie's mortal foes,  
When, pop! she starts before their nose; 200  
As eager runs the market-crowd,  
When *Catch the thief!* resounds aloud:  
So Maggie runs,—the witches follow,  
Wi' monie an eldritch skreich and hollo.

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou 'll get thy fairin'!  
In hell they 'll roast thee like a herrin'!  
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin'—  
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!  
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,  
And win the key-stane of the brig; 210

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

There at them thou thy tail may toss,—  
A running stream they dare na cross.  
But ere the key-stane she could make,  
The fient a tail she had to shake;  
For Nannie, far before the rest,  
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,  
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle:  
But little wist she Maggie's mettle!  
Ae spring brought aff her master hale,  
But left behind her ain gray tail:  
The carlin caught her by the rump,  
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump. 220

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,  
Ilk man and mother's son take heed:  
Whene'er to drink you are inclined,  
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,  
Think! ye may buy the joys o'er dear:  
Remember Tam O'Shanter's mare. 226

# SHORT STORIES IN VERSE



## THE FOOL'S PRAYER

THE royal feast was done; the King  
Sought some new sport to banish care,  
And to his jester cried: "Sir Fool,  
Kneel now, and make for us a prayer!" 4

The jester doffed his cap and bells,  
And stood the mocking court before;  
They could not see the bitter smile  
Behind the painted grin he wore. 8

He bowed his head, and bent his knee  
Upon the monarch's silken stool;  
His pleading voice arose: "O Lord,  
Be merciful to me, a fool! 12

"No pity, Lord, could change the heart  
From red with wrong to white as wool:  
The rod must heal the sin; but, Lord,  
Be merciful to me, a fool! 16

"'T is not by guilt the onward sweep  
Of truth and right, O Lord, we stay;  
'T is by our follies that so long  
We hold the earth from heaven away. 20

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

“These clumsy feet, still in the mire,  
Go crushing blossoms without end;  
These hard, well-meaning hands we thrust  
Among the heart-strings of a friend. 24

“The ill-timed truth we might have kept—  
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung!  
The word we had not sense to say—  
Who knows how grandly it had rung! 28

“Our faults no tenderness should ask,  
The chastening stripes must cleanse them all;  
But for our blunders—oh, in shame  
Before the eyes of heaven we fall. 32

“Earth bears no balsam for mistakes;  
Men crown the knave, and scourge the fool  
That did his will; but Thou, O Lord,  
Be merciful to me, a fool!” 36

The room was hushed; in silence rose  
The King, and sought his gardens cool,  
And walked apart, and murmured low,  
“Be merciful to me, a fool!” 40

1887. Edward Rowland Sill.

## THE DREAM OF EUGENE ARAM

'T WAS in the prime of summer time,  
An evening calm and cool,  
And four-and-twenty happy boys  
Came bounding out of school;  
There were some that ran, and some that  
leapt  
Like troutlets in a pool. 6

Away they sped with gamesome minds  
And souls untouched by sin;  
To a level mead they came, and there  
They drove the wickets in:  
Pleasantly shone the setting sun  
Over the town of Lynn. 12

Like sportive deer they coursed about,  
And shouted as they ran,  
Turning to mirth all things of earth  
As only boyhood can;  
But the usher sat remote from all,  
A melancholy man! 18

His hat was off, his vest apart,  
To catch heaven's blessed breeze;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

For a burning thought was in his brow,  
And his bosom ill at ease;  
So he leaned his head on his hands, and  
read  
The book between his knees.

24

Leaf after leaf he turned it o'er,  
Nor ever glanced aside,—  
For the peace of his soul he read that book  
In the golden eventide;  
Much study had made him very lean,  
And pale, and leaden-eyed.

30

At last he shut the ponderous tome;  
With a fast and fervent grasp  
He strained the dusky covers close,  
And fixed the brazen hasp:  
“O God! could I so close my mind,  
And clasp it with a clasp!”

36

Then leaping on his feet upright,  
Some moody turns he took,—  
Now up the mead, then down the mead,  
And past a shady nook,—  
And, lo! he saw a little boy  
That pored upon a book.

42

“My gentle lad, what is 't you read,—  
Romance or fairy fable?  
Or is it some historic page,  
Of kings and crowns unstable?”  
The young boy gave an upward glance,—  
“It is ‘The Death of Abel.’”

48

## The Dream of Eugene Aram

The usher took six hasty strides,  
As smit with sudden pain,—  
Six hasty strides beyond the place,  
Then slowly back again;  
And down he sat beside the lad,  
And talked with him of Cain;

54

And, long since then, of bloody men,  
Whose deeds tradition saves;  
And lonely folk cut off unseen,  
And hid in sudden graves;  
And horrid stabs, in groves forlorn;  
And murders done in caves;

60

And how the sprites of injured men  
Shriek upward from the sod;  
Ay, how the ghostly hand will point  
To show the burial clod;  
And unknown facts of guilty acts  
Are seen in dreams from God.

66

He told how murderers walked the earth  
Beneath the curse of Cain,—  
With crimson clouds before their eyes,  
And flames about their brain;  
For blood has left upon their souls  
Its everlasting stain!

72

“And well,” quoth he, “I know, for truth,  
Their pangs must be extreme—  
Woe, woe, unutterable woe!—  
Who spill life’s sacred stream!

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

For why? Methought, last night I  
wrought  
A murder, in a dream!

78

“One that had never done me wrong,—  
A feeble man and old;  
I led him to a lonely field,—  
The moon shone clear and cold:  
Now here, said I, this man shall die,  
And I will have his gold!

84

“Two sudden blows with a ragged stick,  
And one with a heavy stone,  
One hurried gash with a hasty knife,—  
And then the deed was done:  
There was nothing lying at my feet  
But lifeless flesh and bone!

90

“Nothing but lifeless flesh and bone,  
That could not do me ill;  
And yet I feared him all the more  
For lying there so still:  
There was a manhood in his look  
That murder could not kill!

96

“And, lo! the universal air  
Seemed lit with ghastly flame,—  
Ten thousand thousand dreadful eyes  
Were looking down in blame;  
I took the dead man by his hand,  
And called upon his name.

102

## The Dream of Eugene Aram

“O God! it made me quake to see  
Such sense within the slain;  
But, when I touched the lifeless clay,  
The blood gushed out amain!  
For every clot a burning spot  
Was scorching in my brain!

108

“My head was like an ardent coal,  
My heart as solid ice;  
My wretched, wretched soul, I knew,  
Was at the Devil’s price:  
A dozen times I groaned,—the dead  
Had never groaned but twice.

114

“And now, from forth the frowning sky,  
From the heaven’s topmost height,  
I heard a voice,—the awful voice  
Of the blood-avenging sprite:  
‘Thou guilty man! take up thy dead,  
And hide it from my sight!’

120

“I took the dreary body up,  
And cast it in a stream,—  
The sluggish water black as ink,  
The depth was so extreme:—  
My gentle boy, remember, this  
Is nothing but a dream!

126

“Down went the corse with a hollow plunge,  
And vanished in the pool;  
Anon I cleansed my bloody hands,  
And washed my forehead cool,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And sat among the urchins young,  
That evening, in the school.

132

“O Heaven! to think of their white souls,  
And mine so black and grim!  
I could not share in childish prayer,  
Nor join in evening hymn;  
Like a devil of the pit I seemed,  
Mid holy cherubim!

138

“And Peace went with them, one and all,  
And each calm pillow spread;  
But Guilt was my grim chamberlain,  
That lighted me to bed,  
And drew my midnight curtains round  
With fingers bloody red!

144

“All night I lay in agony,  
In anguish dark and deep;  
My fevered eyes I dared not close,  
But stared aghast at Sleep:  
For Sin had rendered unto her  
The keys of hell to keep!

150

“All night I lay in agony,  
From weary chime to chime;  
With one besetting horrid hint  
That racked me all the time,—  
A mighty yearning, like the first  
Fierce impulse unto crime,—

156

## The Dream of Eugene Aram

“One stern tyrannic thought, that made  
    All other thoughts its slave!  
Stronger and stronger every pulse  
    Did that temptation crave,—  
Still urging me to go and see  
    The dead man in his grave!

162

“Heavily I rose up, as soon  
    As light was in the sky,  
And sought the black accursèd pool  
    With a wild, misgiving eye;  
And I saw the dead in the river-bed,  
    For the faithless stream was dry.

168

“Merrily rose the lark, and shook  
    The dew-drop from its wing;  
But I never marked its morning flight,  
    I never heard it sing:  
For I was stooping once again  
    Under the horrid thing.

174

“With breathless speed, like a soul in chase,  
    I took him up and ran;  
There was no time to dig a grave  
    Before the day began,—  
In a lonesome wood, with heaps of leaves,  
    I hid the murdered man!

180

“And all that day I read in school,  
    But my thought was otherwhere;  
As soon as the midday task was done,  
    In secret I was there,—

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And a mighty wind had swept the leaves,  
And still the corse was bare! 186

“Then down I cast me on my face,  
And first began to weep,  
For I knew my secret then was one  
That earth refused to keep,—  
Or land or sea, though he should be  
Ten thousand fathoms deep. 192

“So wills the fierce avenging sprite,  
Till blood for blood atones!  
Ay, though he 's buried in a cave,  
And trodden down with stones,  
And years have rotted off his flesh,—  
The world shall see his bones! 198

“O God! that horrid, horrid dream  
Besets me now awake!  
Again—again, with dizzy brain,  
The human life I take;  
And my red right hand grows raging hot,  
Like Cranmer's at the stake. 204

“And still no peace for the restless clay  
Will wave or mould allow;  
The horrid thing pursues my soul,—  
It stands before me now!”  
The fearful boy looked up, and saw  
Huge drops upon his brow. 210

## The Statue and the Bust

That very night, while gentle sleep  
The urchin eyelids kissed,  
Two stern-faced men set out from Lynn  
Through the cold and heavy mist;  
And Eugene Aram walked between,  
With gyves upon his wrist. 216

1829.

Thomas Hood.

## THE STATUE AND THE BUST

THERE 's a palace in Florence, the world knows  
well,  
And a statue watches it from the square,  
And this story of both do our townsmen tell. 3

Ages ago, a lady there,  
At the farthest window facing the East  
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?" 6

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;  
She leaned forth, one on either hand;  
They saw how the blush of the bride in-  
creased—9

They felt by its beats her heart expand—  
As one at each ear and both in a breath  
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand." 12

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

That selfsame instant, underneath,  
The Duke rode past in his idle way,  
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath. 15

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,  
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"  
—"A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day." 18

Hair in heaps lay heavily  
Over a pale brow spirit-pure—  
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree, 21

Crisped like a war steed's encolure—  
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes  
Of the blackest black our eyes endure, 24

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise  
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—  
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise. 27

He looked at her as a lover can;  
She looked at him, as one who awakes:  
The past was a sleep, and her life began. 30

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,  
A feast was held that selfsame night  
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes. 33

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,  
But the palace overshadows one,  
Because of a crime, which may God requite! 36

## The Statue and the Bust

To Florence and God the wrong was done  
Through the first republic's murder there  
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

39

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)  
Turned in the midst of his multitude  
At the bright approach of the bridal pair. 42

Face to face the lovers stood  
A single minute and no more,  
While the bridegroom bent as a man sub-  
dued—

45

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—  
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred.  
As the courtly custom was of yore.

48

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?  
If a word did pass, which I do not think,  
Only one out of a thousand heard.

51

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink  
He and his bride were alone at last  
In a bed chamber by a taper's blink.

54

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,  
That the door she had passed was shut on her  
Till the final catafalque repassed.

57

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,  
Through a certain window facing the East  
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

60

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,  
And a feast might lead to so much beside,  
He, of many evils, chose the least. 63

“Freely I choose too,” said the bride—  
“Your window and its world suffice,”  
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied— 66

“If I spend the night with that devil twice,  
May his window serve as my loop of hell  
Whence a damned soul looks on paradise! 69

“I fly to the Duke who loves me well,  
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow  
Ere I count another ave-bell. 72

“’T is only the coat of a page to borrow,  
And tie my hair in a horse-boy’s trim,  
And I save my soul—but not to-morrow”— 75

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)  
“My father tarries to bless my state:  
I must keep it one day more for him. 78

“Is one day more so long to wait?  
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;  
We shall see each other, sure as fate.” 81

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!  
So we resolve on a thing and sleep:  
So did the lady, ages ago. 84

## The Statue and the Bust

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap  
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove  
To body or soul, I will drain it deep." 87

And on the morrow, bold with love,  
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,  
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove) 90

And smiled " 'T was a very funeral,  
Your lady will think, this feast of ours,—  
A shame to efface whate'er befall ! 93

" What if we break from the Arno bowers,  
And try if Petraja, cool and green,  
Cure last night's faults with this morning's  
flowers ? " 96

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen  
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,  
Said, " Too much favor for me so mean ! 99

" But, alas ! my lady leaves the South ;  
Each wind that comes from the Apennine  
Is a menace to her tender youth : 102

" Nor a way exists, the wise opine,  
If she quits her palace twice this year,  
To avert the flower of life's decline." 105

Quoth the Duke, " A sage and a kindly fear.  
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring :  
Be our feast to-night as usual here ! " 108

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And then to himself—" Which night shall bring  
Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—  
Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!      111

" Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—  
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France  
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool. 114

" I need thee still and might miss perchance.  
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,  
With its hope of my lady's countenance: 117

" For I ride—what should I do but ride?  
And passing her palace, if I list,  
May glance at its window—well betide!" 120

So said, so done: nor the lady missed  
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,  
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit  
kissed.      123

Be sure that each renewed the vow,  
No morrow's sun should arise and set  
And leave them then as it left them now. 126

But next day passed, and next day yet,  
With still fresh cause to wait one day more  
Ere each leaped over the parapet.      129

And still, as love's brief morning wore,  
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,  
They found love not as it seemed before. 132

## The Statue and the Bust

They thought it would work infallibly,  
But not in despite of heaven and earth:  
The rose would blow when the storm passed  
by. 135

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth  
By store of fruits that supplant the rose:  
The world and its ways have a certain  
worth: 138

And to press a point while these oppose  
Were simple policy; better wait:  
We lose no friends and we gain no foes. 141

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,  
Who daily may ride and pass and look  
Where his lady watches behind the grate! 144

And she—she watched the square like a book  
Holding one picture and only one,  
Which daily to find she undertook: 147

When the picture was reached the book was  
done,  
And she turned from the picture at night to  
scheme  
Of tearing it out for herself next sun. 150

So weeks grew months, years; gleam by gleam  
The glory dropped from their youth and love,  
And both perceived they had dreamed a  
dream; 153

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:  
But who can take a dream for a truth?  
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove! 156

One day as the lady saw her youth  
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked  
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth, 159

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—  
And wondered who the woman was,  
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked, 162

Fronting her silent in the glass—  
“Summon here,” she suddenly said,  
“Before the rest of my old self pass, 165

“Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,  
Who fashions the clay no love will change,  
And fixes a beauty never to fade. 168

“Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange  
Arrest the remains of young and fair,  
And rivet them while the seasons range. 171

“Make me a face on the window there,  
Waiting as ever, mute the while,  
My love to pass below in the square! 174

“And let me think that it may beguile  
Dreary days which the dead must spend  
Down in their darkness under the aisle, 177

## The Statue and the Bust

“To say, ‘What matters it at the end?  
I did no more while my heart was warm  
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.’ 180

“Where is the use of the lip’s red charm,  
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,  
And the blood that blues the inside arm— 183

“Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,  
The earthly gift to an end divine?  
A lady of clay is as good, I trow.” 186

But long ere Robbia’s cornice, fine,  
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,  
Was set where now is the empty shrine— 189

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,  
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,  
The passionate pale lady’s face— 192

Eying ever, with earnest eye  
And quick-turned neck at its breathless  
stretch,  
Some one who ever is passing by— 195

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch  
In Florence, “Youth—my dream escapes!  
Will its record stay?” And he bade them  
fetch 198

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—  
“Can the soul, the will, die out of a man  
Ere his body find the grave that gapes? 201

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

“ John of Douay shall effect my plan,  
Set me on horseback here aloft,  
Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

204

“ In the very square I have crossed so oft:  
That men may admire, when future suns  
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

207

“ While the mouth and the brow stay brave in  
bronze—  
Admire and say, ‘ When he was alive  
How he would take his pleasure once! ’

210

“ And it shall go hard but I contrive  
To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb  
At idleness which aspires to strive.”

213

So! While these wait the trump of doom,  
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,  
Nights and days in the narrow room?

216

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder  
What a gift life was, ages ago,  
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

219

Only they see not God, I know,  
Nor all that chivalry of his;  
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

222

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—  
Since, the end of life being manifest,  
He had burned his way through the world to  
this.

225

## The Statue and the Bust

I hear you reproach, "But delay was best,  
For their end was a crime."—Oh, a crime will  
do

As well, I reply, to serve for a test, 228

As a virtue golden through and through,  
Sufficient to vindicate itself  
And prove its worth at a moment's view! 231

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?  
Where a button goes, 't were an epigram  
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph. 234

The true has no value beyond the sham:  
As well the counter as coin, I submit,  
When your table 's a hat, and your prize, a  
dram. 237

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,  
Venture as warily, use the same skill,  
Do your best, whether winning or losing it, 240

If you choose to play!—is my principle.  
Let a man contend to the uttermost  
For his life's set prize, be it what it will! 243

The counter our lovers staked was lost  
As surely as if it were lawful coin:  
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost 246

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,  
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.  
You of the virtue (we issue join)  
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

25¢

1855.

Robert Browning.

### THE PRIVATE OF THE BUFFS

#### OR, THE BRITISH SOLDIER IN CHINA

*Last night*, among his fellow roughs,  
He jested, quaffed, and swore;  
A drunken private of the Buffs,  
Who never looked before.

*To-day*, beneath the foeman's frown,  
He stands in Elgin's place,  
Ambassador from Britain's crown,  
And type of all her race.

Poor, reckless, rude, low-born, untaught,  
Bewildered, and alone,  
A heart, with English instinct fraught,  
He yet can call his own.

Ay, tear his body limb from limb,  
Bring cord or axe or flame:  
He only knows that not through him  
Shall England come to shame.

16

Far Kentish hop-fields round him seemed,  
Like dreams, to come and go;  
Bright leagues of cherry-blossom gleamed,  
One sheet of living snow;

## Ramon

The smoke above his father's door  
In gray soft eddyings hung;  
Must he then watch it rise no more,  
Doomed by himself, so young? 24

Yes, honour calls!—with strength like steel  
He put the vision by;  
Let dusky Indians whine and kneel,  
An English lad must die.  
And thus, with eyes that would not shrink,  
With knee to man unbent,  
Unfaltering on its dreadful brink,  
To his red grave he went. 32

Vain mightiest fleets of iron framed,  
Vain those all-shattering guns,  
Unless proud England keep untamed  
The strong heart of her sons;  
So let his name through Europe ring,—  
A man of mean estate,  
Who died, as firm as Sparta's king,  
Because his soul was great. 40

1860.

*Sir Francis Hastings Doyle.*

## RAMON

(REFUGIO MINE, NORTHERN MEXICO)

DRUNK and senseless in his place,  
Prone and sprawling on his face,  
More like brute than any man  
Alive or dead,—

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

By his great pump out of gear,  
Lay the peon engineer,  
Waking only just to hear,  
Overhead,  
Angry tones that called his name,  
Oaths and cries of bitter blame,—  
Woke to hear all this, and waking, turned  
and fled!

11

“To the man who 'll bring to me,”  
Cried Intendant Harry Lee,—  
Harry Lee, the English foreman of the  
mine,—  
“Bring the sot alive or dead,  
I will give to him,” he said,  
“Fifteen hundred *pesos* down,  
Just to set the rascal's crown  
Underneath this heel of mine:  
Since but death  
Deserves the man whose deed,  
Be it vice or want of heed,  
Stops the pumps that give us breath,—  
Stops the pumps that suck the death  
From the poisoned lower levels of the  
mine!”

25

No one answered, for a cry  
From the shaft rose up on high;  
And shuffling, scrambling, tumbling from  
below,  
Came the miners each, the bolder  
Mounting on the weaker's shoulder,

## Ramon

Grappling, clinging to their hold or  
Letting go,  
As the weaker gasped and fell  
From the ladder to the well,—  
To the poisoned pit of hell  
Down below!

36

“To the man who sets them free,”  
Cried the foreman, Harry Lee,—  
Harry Lee, the English foreman of the  
mine,—  
“Brings them out and sets them free,  
I will give that man,” said he,  
“Twice that sum, who with a rope  
Face to face with death shall cope:  
Let him come who dares to hope!”  
“Hold your peace!” some one replied,  
Standing by the foreman’s side;  
“There has one already gone, whoe’er he  
be!”

47

Then they held their breath with awe,  
Pulling on the rope, and saw  
Fainting figures reappear,  
On the black rope swinging clear,  
Fastened by some skilful hand from below;  
Till a score the level gained,  
And but one alone remained,—  
He the hero and the last,  
He whose skilful hand made fast  
The long line that brought them back to hope  
and cheer!

57

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Haggard, gasping, down dropped he  
At the feet of Harry Lee,—  
Harry Lee, the English foreman of the mine.  
“I have come,” he gasped, “to claim  
Both rewards, Señor,—my name  
Is Ramon!  
I’m the drunken engineer,—  
I’m the coward, Señor—” Here  
He fell over, by that sign  
Dead as stone!

67

1871.

*Francis Bret Harte.*

## THE SONG OF THE CAMP

“GIVE us a song!” the soldiers cried,  
The outer trenches guarding,  
When the heated guns of the camps allied  
Grew weary of bombarding.

4

The dark Redan, in silent scoff,  
Lay grim and threatening under;  
And the tawny mound of the Malakoff  
No longer belched its thunder.

8

There was a pause. A guardsman said:  
“We storm the forts to-morrow;  
Sing while we may, another day  
Will bring enough of sorrow.”

12

## The Song of the Camp

They lay along the battery's side,  
Below the smoking cannon:  
Brave hearts from Severn and from Clyde,  
And from the banks of Shannon. 16

They sang of love, and not of fame;  
Forgot was Britain's glory:  
Each heart recalled a different name,  
But all sang "Annie Laurie." 20

Voice after voice caught up the song,  
Until its tender passion  
Rose like an anthem, rich and strong,—  
Their battle-eve confession. 24

Dear girl, her name he dared not speak,  
But as the song grew louder,  
Something upon the soldier's cheek  
Washed off the stains of powder. 28

Beyond the darkening ocean burned  
The bloody sunset's embers,  
While the Crimean valleys learned  
How English love remembers. 32

And once again a fire of hell  
Rained on the Russian quarters,  
With scream of shot, and burst of shell,  
And bellowing of the mortars! 36

And Irish Nora's eyes are dim  
For a singer dumb and gory;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And English Mary mourns for him  
Who sang of "Annie Laurie."

40

Sleep, soldiers! still in honored rest  
Your truth and valor wearing:  
The bravest are the tenderest,—  
The loving are the daring.

44

1851.

Bayard Taylor.

## THE PATRIOT

### AN OLD STORY

It was roses, roses, all the way,  
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:  
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,  
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,  
A year ago on this very day.

5

The air broke into a mist with bells,  
The old walls rocked with the crowd and  
cries.

Had I said, "Good folk, mere noise repels—  
But give me your sun from yonder skies!"  
They had answered, "And afterward, what  
else?"

10

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun  
To give it my loving friends to keep!

## The Forsaken Merman

Naught man could do, have I left undone:  
And you see my harvest, what I reap  
This very day, now a year is run.

15

There 's nobody on the house-tops now—  
Just a palsied few at the windows set;  
For the best of the sight is, all allow,  
At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,  
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

20

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,  
A rope cuts both my wrists behind;  
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,  
For they fling, whoever has a mind,  
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

25

Thus I entered, and thus I go!  
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.  
"Paid by the world, what dost thou owe  
Me?"—God might question; now instead,  
"T is God shall repay: I am safer so.

30

1865.

*Robert Browning.*

## THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

COME, dear children, let us away;  
Down and away below!  
Now my brothers call from the bay,  
Now the great winds shoreward blow,  
Now the salt tides seaward flow;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Now the wild white horses play,  
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.  
Children dear, let us away!  
This way, this way!

Call her once before you go—  
Call once yet!  
In a voice that she will know:  
“Margaret! Margaret!”  
Children’s voices should be dear  
(Call once more) to a mother’s ear;  
Children’s voices, wild with pain—  
Surely she will come again!  
Call her once and come away;  
This way, this way!  
“Mother dear, we cannot stay!  
The wild white horses foam and fret.”  
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;  
Call no more!  
One last look at the white-wall’d town,  
And the little grey church on the windy shore;  
Then come down!  
She will not come though you call all day;  
Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday  
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?  
In the caverns where we lay,  
Through the surf and through the swell,  
The far-off sound of a silver bell?

## The Forsaken Merman

Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,  
Where the winds are all asleep;  
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,  
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,  
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,  
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;      40  
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,  
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;  
Where great whales come sailing by,  
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,  
Round the world for ever and aye?  
When did music come this way?  
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday  
(Call yet once) that she went away?  
Once she sate with you and me,      50  
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,  
And the youngest sate on her knee.  
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it  
    well,  
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.  
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear  
    green sea;  
She said: "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray  
In the little grey church on the shore to-day.  
'T will be Easter-time in the world—ah me!  
And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with  
    thee."  
I said: "Go up, dear heart, through the  
    waves;      60

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!"

She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.

Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?

"The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan; Long prayers," I said, "in the world they say; Come!" I said; and we rose through the surf in the bay.

We went up the beach, by the sandy down Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town;

Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,

To the little grey church on the windy hill. From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,

But we stood without in the cold blowing airs. We climb'd on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,

And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.

She sat by the pillar; we saw her clear:

"Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here! Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone; The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."

But, ah, she gave me never a look, For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book! Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.

Come away, children, call no more!

Come away, come down, call no more!

70

80

## The Forsaken Merman

Down, down, down!  
Down to the depths of the sea!  
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,  
Singing most joyfully.  
Hark what she sings: "O joy, O joy,  
For the humming street, and the child with its  
toy!" 90  
For the priest and the bell, and the holy well;  
For the wheel where I spun,  
And the blessed light of the sun!"  
And so she sings her fill,  
Singing most joyfully,  
Till the spindle drops from her hand,  
And the whizzing wheel stands still.  
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,  
And over the sand at the sea;  
And her eyes are set in a stare; 100  
And anon there breaks a sigh,  
And anon there drops a tear,  
From a sorrow-clouded eye,  
And a heart sorrow-laden,  
A long, long sigh;  
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mer-  
maiden  
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children;  
Come, children, come down!  
The hoarse wind blows coldly; 110  
Lights shine in the town.  
She will start from her slumber  
When gusts shake the door;  
She will hear the winds howling,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Will hear the waves roar.  
We shall see, while above us  
The waves roar and whirl,  
A ceiling of amber,  
A pavement of pearl.  
Singing: "Here came a mortal,  
But faithless was she!  
And alone dwell for ever  
The kings of the sea."

120

But, children, at midnight,  
When soft the winds blow,  
When clear falls the moonlight,  
When spring tides are low;  
When sweet airs come seaward  
From heaths starr'd with broom,  
And high rocks throw mildly  
On the blanch'd sands a gloom;  
Up the still, glistening beaches,  
Up the creeks we will hie,  
Over banks of bright seaweed  
The ebb-tide leaves dry.  
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,  
At the white, sleeping town;  
At the church on the hill-side—  
And then come back down.  
Singing: "There dwells a loved one,  
But cruel is she!  
She left lonely for ever  
The kings of the sea."

130

1849.

*Matthew Arnold.*

## MOTHER AND POET

TURIN,—AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA 1861

DEAD! one of them shot by the sea in the east,  
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.

Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the  
feast

And are wanting a great song for Italy free,  
Let none look at *me!*

5

Yet I was a poetess only last year,  
And good at my art, for a woman, men said;  
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized here,  
—The east sea and west sea rhyme on in her  
head  
Forever instead.

10

What art can a woman be good at? O, vain!  
What art *is* she good at, but hurting her  
breast  
With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile at  
the pain?  
Ah, boys, how you hurt! you were strong as  
you pressed,  
And I proud by that test.

15

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

What art's for a woman? To hold on her  
knees

Both darlings! to feel all their arms round  
her throat

Cling, strangle a little! to sew by degrees

And 'broider the long-clothes and neat little  
coat;

To dream and to dote.

20

To teach them . . . It stings there. I made  
them indeed

Speak plain the word "country," I taught  
them, no doubt,

That a country 's a thing men should die for  
at need.

I prated of liberty, rights, and about  
The tyrant turned out.

25

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my beauti-  
ful eyes! . . .

I exulted; nay, let them go forth at the wheels  
Of the guns, and denied not.—But then the  
surprise,

When one sits quite alone!—Then one weeps,  
then one kneels!

—God! how the house feels!

30

At first happy news came, in gay letters moiled  
With my kisses, of camp-life, and glory, and  
how

They both loved me; and, soon, coming home to  
be spoiled,

## Mother and Poet

In return would fan off every fly from my  
brow

With their green laurel-bough.

35

Then was triumph at Turin: "Ancona was  
free!"

And some one came out of the cheers in the  
street,

With a face pale as stone, to say something to  
me.

—My Guido was dead!—I fell down at his  
feet,

While they cheered in the street.

40

I bore it;—friends soothed me: my grief looked  
sublime

As the ransom of Italy. One boy remained  
To be leant on and walked with, recalling the  
time

When the first grew immortal, while both of  
us strained

To the height he had gained.

45

And letters still came,—shorter, sadder, more  
strong,

Writ now but in one hand, "I was not to  
faint,—

One loved me for two . . . would be with me  
erelong:

And 'Viva l'Italia'!—he died for, our saint,  
Who forbids our complaint."

50

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

My Nanni would add, "he was safe, and aware  
Of a presence that turned off the balls . . .  
was imprest  
It was Guido himself, who knew what I could  
bear,  
And how 't was impossible, quite dispossessed  
To live on for the rest." 55

On which without pause up the telegraph line  
Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta:—  
"Shot.  
Tell his mother." Ah, ah, "his," "their"  
mother; not "mine."  
No voice says "*my* mother" again to me.  
What!  
You think Guido forgot? 60

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy with  
Heaven,  
They drop earth's affections, conceive not of  
woe?  
I think not. Themselves were too lately for-  
given  
Through THAT Love and Sorrow which recon-  
ciled so  
The Above and Below. 65

O Christ of the five wounds, who look'dst  
through the dark  
To the face of thy mother! consider, I pray,  
How we common mothers stand desolate, mark,

## Mother and Poet

Whose sons, not being Christs, die with eyes  
turned away,  
And no last word to say! 70

Both boys dead? but that 's out of nature. We  
all  
Have been patriots, yet each house must  
always keep one.  
'T were imbecile, hewing out roads to a wall;  
And when Italy 's made, for what end is it  
done  
If we have not a son? 75

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta 's taken, what then?  
When the fair wicked queen sits no more at  
her sport  
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of  
men?  
When your guns at Cavalli with final retort  
Have cut the game short? 80

When Venice and Rome keep their new jubilee,  
When your flag takes all heaven for its white,  
green, and red,  
When *you* have your country from mountain  
to sea,  
When King Victor has Italy's crown on his  
head,  
(And *I* have my *Dead*)— 85

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring your  
bells low,  
And burn your lights faintly!—*My country*  
*is there,*  
Above the star pricked by the last peak of snow:  
My Italy's *THERE*,—with my brave civic Pair,  
To disfranchise despair! 90

Forgive me. Some women bear children in  
strength,  
And bite back the cry of their pain in self-  
scorn:  
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us at  
length  
Into such wail as this!—and we sit on for-  
lorn  
When the man-child is born. 95

Dead! one of them shot by the sea in the east,  
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.  
Both! both my boys!—If in keeping the feast  
You want a great song for your Italy free,  
Let none look at me! 100

1862.

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning.*

## ULALUME

THE skies they were ashen and sober;  
The leaves they were crisped and sere,  
The leaves they were withering and sere;  
It was night in the lonesome October  
Of my most immemorial year;

## Ulalume

It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,  
In the misty mid region of Weir:  
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,  
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir. 9

Here once, through an alley Titanic  
Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul—  
Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul.  
These were days when my heart was volcanic  
As the scoriac rivers that roll,  
As the lavas that restlessly roll  
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek  
In the ultimate climes of the pole,  
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek  
In the realms of the boreal pole. 19

Our talk had been serious and sober,  
But our thoughts they were palsied and  
sere,  
Our memories were treacherous and  
sere,—  
For we knew not the month was October,  
And we marked not the night of the year  
(Ah, night of all nights in the year!)—  
We noted not the dim lake of Auber  
(Though once we had journeyed down  
here)—  
Remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,  
Nor the ghoul-haunted woodland of  
Weir. 29

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And now, as the night was senescent  
    And the star-dials pointed to morn,  
    As the star-dials hinted of morn,  
At the end of our path a liquefiant  
    And nebulous lustre was born,  
Out of which a miraculous crescent  
    Arose with a duplicate horn—  
Astarte's bediamonded crescent  
    Distinct with its duplicate horn.

38

And I said: "She is warmer than Dian:  
    She rolls through an ether of sighs—  
    She revels in a region of sighs:  
She has seen that the tears are not dry on  
    These cheeks, where the worm never dies,  
And has come past the stars of the Lion  
    To point us the path to the skies,  
    To the Lethean peace of the skies:  
Come up, in despite of the Lion,  
    To shine on us with her bright eyes:  
Come up through the lair of the Lion,  
    With love in her luminous eyes."

50

But Psyche, uplifting her finger,  
    Said: " Sadly this star I mistrust,  
    Her pallor I strangely mistrust:—  
Oh, hasten!—oh, let us not linger!  
    Oh, fly!—let us fly!—for we must."  
In terror she spoke, letting sink her  
    Wings until they trailed in the dust;

## Ulalume

In agony sobbed, letting sink her  
Plumes till they trailed in the dust—  
Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust. 60

I replied—"This is nothing but dreaming:  
Let us on by this tremulous light!  
Let us bathe in this crystalline light!  
Its sibyllic splendor beaming  
With hope and in beauty to-night:  
See, it flickers up the sky through the night!  
Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,  
And be sure it will lead us aright:  
We safely may trust to a gleaming  
That cannot but guide us aright,  
Since it flickers up to Heaven through the  
night." 71

Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,  
And tempted her out of her gloom,  
And conquered her scruples and gloom:  
And we passed to the end of the vista,  
But were stopped by the door of a tomb,  
By the door of a legended tomb;  
And I said: "What is written, sweet sister,  
On the door of this legended tomb?"  
She replied: "Ulalume—Ulalume—  
'T is the vault of thy lost Ulalume!" 81

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober  
As the leaves that were crisped and sere,  
As the leaves that were withering and sere,

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

And I cried: "It was surely October  
On *this* very night of last year  
That I journeyed—I journeyed down here—  
That I brought a dread burden down here:  
On this night of all nights in the year,  
Ah, what demon has tempted me here?  
Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber,  
This misty region of Weir:  
Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,  
This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir." 94

1847. *London: Smith, Elder, & Co.* *Edgar Allan Poe.*

## LORRAINE

"ARE you ready for your steeple-chase,  
Lorraine, Lorraine, Lorrèe?  
Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum,  
Barum, Barum, Baree.  
You 're booked to ride your capping race to-  
day at Coulterlee,  
You 're booked to ride Vindictive, for all the  
world to see,  
To keep him straight, and keep him first, and  
win the run for me."  
Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum,  
Barum, Barum, Baree. 9

She clasp'd her new-born baby, poor Lorraine,  
Lorraine, Lorree,  
Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum,  
Barum, Barum, Baree.

## Lorraine

“I cannot ride Vindictive, as any man might see,  
And I will not ride Vindictive, with this baby  
on my knee; <sup>10</sup>  
He’s kill’d a boy, he’s kill’d a man, and why  
must he kill me?” <sup>15</sup>

“Unless you ride Vindictive, Lorraine, Lorraine,  
Lorrée,  
Unless you ride Vindictive to-day at Coulterlee,  
And land him safe across the brook, and win  
the blank for me,  
It’s you may keep your baby, for you’ll get  
no keep from me.” <sup>19</sup>

“That husbands could be cruel,” said Lorraine,  
Lorraine, Lorrée,  
“That husbands could be cruel, I have known  
for seasons three;  
But oh! to ride Vindictive while a baby cries  
for me,  
And be kill’d across a fence at last for all the  
world to see!” <sup>23</sup>

She master’d young Vindictive—Oh! the gallant  
lass was she!  
And kept him straight and won the race as  
near as near could be;  
But he kill’d her at the brook against a pollard  
willow tree;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Oh! he kill'd her at the brook, the brute, for  
all the world to see,  
And no one but the baby cried for poor  
Lorraine, Lorrèe. 28

1874.

Charles Kingsley.

## TELLING THE BEES

HERE is the place; right over the hill  
Runs the path I took;  
You can see the gap in the old wall still,  
And the stepping-stones in the shallow  
brook. 4

There is the house, with the gates red-barred,  
And the poplars tall;  
And the barn's brown length, and the cattle-  
yard,  
And the white horns tossing above the wall. 8

There are the beehives ranged in the sun;  
And down by the brink  
Of the brook are her poor flowers, weed-  
o'erun,  
Pansy and daffodil, rose and pink. 12

A year has gone, as the tortoise goes,  
Heavy and slow;  
And the same rose blows, and the same sun  
glows,  
And the same brook sings of a year ago. 16

## Telling the Bees

There 's the same sweet clover-smell in the  
breeze;

And the June sun warm  
Tangles his wings of fire in the trees,  
Setting, as then, over Fernside farm.

20

I mind me how with a lover's care  
From my Sunday coat

I brushed off the burrs, and smoothed my hair,  
And cooled at the brookside my brow and  
throat.

24

Since we parted, a month had passed,—  
To love, a year;

Down through the beeches I looked at last  
On the little red gate and the well-sweep  
near.

28

I can see it all now,—the slantwise rain  
Of light through the leaves,

The sundown's blaze on her window-pane,  
The bloom of her roses under the eaves.

32

Just the same as a month before,—  
The house and the trees,

The barn's brown gable, that vine by the  
door,—

Nothing changed but the hives of the bees.

36

Before them, under the garden wall,  
Forward and back,

Went drearily singing the chore-girl small,  
Draping each hive with a shred of black.

40

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Trembling, I listened: the summer sun  
Had the chill of snow;  
For I knew she was telling the bees of one  
Gone on the journey we all must go! 44

Then I said to myself, "My Mary weeps  
For the dead to-day:  
Haply her blind old grandsire sleeps  
The fret and pain of his age away." 48

But her dog whined low; on the doorway sill,  
With his cane to his chin,  
The old man sat; and the chore-girl still  
Sung to the bees stealing out and in. 52

And the song she was singing ever since  
In my ears sounds on:—  
"Stay at home, pretty bees, fly not hence!  
Mistress Mary is dead and gone!" 56

1858.

*John Greenleaf Whittier.*

## IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

### EMMIE

OUR doctor had call'd in another, I never had  
seen him before,  
But he sent a chill to my heart when I saw him  
come in at the door,

## In the Children's Hospital

Fresh from the surgery-schools of France and  
of other lands—

Harsh red hair, big voice, big chest, big mer-  
ciless hands!

Wonderful cures he had done, O yes, but they  
said too of him

He was happier using the knife than in trying  
to save the limb,

And that I can well believe, for he look'd so  
coarse and so red,

I could think he was one of those who would  
break their jests on the dead,

And mangle the living dog that had loved him  
and fawn'd at his knee—

Drench'd with the hellish oorali—that ever  
such things should be!

Here was a boy—I am sure that some of our  
children would die

But for the voice of Love, and the smile, and  
the comforting eye—

Here was a boy in the ward, every bone seem'd  
out of its place—

Caught in a mill and crush'd—it was all but a  
hopeless case:

And he handled him gently enough; but his  
voice and his face were not kind,

And it was but a hopeless case, he had seen it  
and made up his mind,

And he said to me roughly “The lad will need  
little more of your care.”

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

“All the more need,” I told him, “to seek the  
Lord Jesus in prayer;  
They are all his children here, and I pray for  
them all as my own:”  
But he turn’d to me, “Ay, good woman, can  
prayer set a broken bone?”  
Then he mutter’d half to himself, but I know  
that I heard him say  
“All very well—but the good Lord Jesus has  
had his day.”

22

Had? has it come? It has only dawn’d. It  
will come by and by.

O how could I serve in the wards if the hope  
of the world were a lie?

How could I bear with the sights and the  
loathsome smells of disease

But that He said “Ye do it to me, when ye do  
it to these”?

26

So he went. And we past to this ward where  
the younger children are laid:

Here is the cot of our orphan, our darling, our  
meek little maid;

Empty you see just now! We have lost her  
who loved her so much—

Patient of pain tho’ as quick as a sensitive  
plant to the touch;

Hers was the prettiest prattle, it often moved  
me to tears,

Hers was the gratefullest heart I have found in  
a child of her years—

## In the Children's Hospital

Nay, you remember our Emmie; you used to  
send her the flowers;  
How she would smile at 'em, play with 'em, talk  
to 'em hours after hours!  
They that can wander at will where the works  
of the Lord are reveal'd  
Little guess what joy can be got from a cow-  
slip out of the field;  
Flowers to these "spirits in prison" are all  
they can know of the spring,  
They freshen and sweeten the wards like the  
waft of an Angel's wing;  
And she lay with a flower in one hand and her  
thin hands crost on her breast—  
Wan, but as pretty as heart can desire, and we  
thought her at rest,  
Quietly sleeping—so quiet, our doctor said  
"Poor little dear,  
Nurse, I must do it to-morrow; she 'll never  
live thro' it, I fear." 42

I walk'd with our kindly old doctor as far as  
the head of the stair,  
Then I return'd to the ward; the child did n't  
see I was there. 44

Never since I was nurse, had I been so grieved  
and so vext!  
Emmie had heard him. Softly she call'd from  
her cot to the next,  
"He says I shall never live thro' it, O Annie,  
what shall I do?"

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Annie consider'd. "If I," said the wise little  
Annie, "was you,  
I should cry to the dear Lord Jesus to help me,  
for, Emmie, you see,  
It's all in the picture there: 'Little children  
should come to me.'"  
(Meaning the print that you gave us, I find that  
it always can please  
Our children, the dear Lord Jesus with chil-  
dren about his knees.)

"Yes, and I will," said Emmie, "but then if I  
call to the Lord,  
How should he know that it's me? such a lot  
of beds in the ward!"  
That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she con-  
sider'd and said:  
"Emmie, you put out your arms, and you leave  
'em outside on the bed—  
The Lord has so *much* to see to! but, Emmie,  
you tell it him plain,  
It's the little girl with her arms lying out on  
the counterpane."

58

I had sat three nights by the child—I could  
not watch her for four—  
My brain had begun to reel—I felt I could do  
it no more.  
That was my sleeping-night, but I thought  
that it never would pass.  
There was a thunderclap once, and a clatter of  
hail on the glass,

## In the Children's Hospital

And there was a phantom cry that I heard as  
I tost about,  
The motherless bleat of a lamb in the storm  
and the darkness without;  
My sleep was broken beside with dreams of the  
dreadful knife  
And fears for our delicate Emmie who scarce  
would escape with her life;  
Then in the gray of the morning it seem'd she  
stood by me and smiled,  
And the doctor came at his hour, and we went  
to see the child. 68

He had brought his ghastly tools: we believed  
her asleep again—  
Her dear, long, lean, little arms lying out on  
the counterpane;  
Say that His day is done! Ah why should we  
care what they say?  
The Lord of the children had heard her, and  
Emmie had past away. 72

1880.

*Lord Tennyson.*



SELECTIONS  
FROM THE LATER POETRY

*Idyls and Stories in Verse*

*Idyls*

*Allegories and Legends*

*Brief Epics and Tales*



## MADONNA OF THE EVENING FLOWERS\*

ALL day long I have been working,  
Now I am tired.  
I call: "Where are you?"  
But there is only the oak tree rustling in the wind.  
The house is very quiet, 5  
The sun shines in on your books,  
On your scissors and thimble just put down,  
But you are not there.  
Suddenly I am lonely:  
Where are you? 10  
I go about searching.

Then I see you,  
Standing under a spire of pale blue larkspur,  
With a basket of roses on your arm.  
You are cool, like silver, 15  
And you smile.  
I think the Canterbury bells are playing little  
tunes.

You tell me that the peonies need spraying,  
That the columbines have overrun all bounds,

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## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

That the *pyrus japonica* should be cut back and rounded. 20

You tell me these things.

But I look at you, heart of silver,  
White heart-flame of polished silver,  
Burning beneath the blue steeples of the larkspur.  
And I long to kneel instantly at your feet, 25  
While all about us peal the loud, sweet *Te Deums*  
of the Canterbury bells.

*Amy Lowell.*

## GLoucester Moors\*

A MILE behind is Gloucester town  
Where the fishing fleets put in,  
A mile ahead the land dips down  
And the woods and farms begin.  
Here, where the moors stretch free  
In the high blue afternoon,  
Are the marching sun and talking sea,  
And the racing winds that wheel and flee  
On the flying heels of June. 9

Jill-o'er-the-ground is purple blue,  
Blue is the quaker-maid,  
The wild geranium holds its dew  
Long in the boulder's shade.  
Wax-red hangs the cup  
From the huckleberry boughs,

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## Gloucester Moors

In barberry bells the grey moths sup  
Or where the choke-cherry lifts high up  
Sweet bowls for their carouse.

18

Over the shelf of the sandy cove  
Beach-peas blossom late.  
By copse and cliff the swallows rove  
Each calling to his mate.  
Seaward the sea-gulls go,  
And the land-birds all are here;  
That green-gold flash was a vireo,  
And yonder flame where the marsh-flags grow  
Was a scarlet tanager.

27

This earth is not the steadfast place  
We landsmen build upon;  
From deep to deep she varies pace,  
And while she comes is gone.  
Beneath my feet I feel  
Her smooth bulk heave and dip;  
With velvet plunge and soft upreel  
She swings and steadies to her keel  
Like a gallant, gallant ship.

36

These summer clouds she sets for sail,  
The sun is her masthead light,  
She tows the moon like a pinnace frail  
Where her phosphor wake churns bright.  
Now hid, now looming clear,  
On the face of the dangerous blue

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

The star fleets tack and wheel and veer,  
But on, but on does the old earth steer  
As if her port she knew.

45

God, dear God! Does she know her port;  
Though she goes so far about?  
Or blind astray, does she make her sport  
To brazen and chance it out?  
I watched when her captains passed:  
She were better captainless.  
Men in the cabin, before the mast,  
But some were reckless and some aghast,  
And some sat gorged at mess.

54

By her battened hatch I leaned and caught  
Sounds from the noisome hold,—  
Cursing and sighing of souls distraught  
And cries too sad to be told.  
Then I strove to go down and see;  
But they said, "Thou art not of us!"  
I turned to those on the deck with me  
And cried, "Give help!" But they said, "Let be:  
Our ship sails faster thus."

63

Jill-o'er-the-ground is purple blue,  
Blue is the quaker-maid,  
The alder-clump where the brook comes through  
Breeds cresses in its shade.  
To be out of the moiling street  
With its swelter and its sin!

## Gloucester Moors

Who has given to me this sweet,  
And given my brother dust to eat?  
And when will his wage come in? 79

Scattering wide or blown in ranks,  
Yellow and white and brown,  
Boats and boats from the fishing banks  
Come home to Gloucester town.  
There is cash to purse and spend,  
There are wives to be embraced,  
Hearts to borrow and hearts to lend,  
And hearts to take and keep to the end,—  
O little sails, make haste! 80

But thou, vast outbound ship of souls,  
What harbor town for thee?  
What shapes, when thy arriving tolls,  
Shall crowd the banks to see?  
Shall all the happy shipmates then  
Stand singing brotherly?  
Or shall a haggard ruthless few  
Warp her over and bring her to,  
While the many broken souls of men 81  
Fester down in the slaver's pen,  
And nothing to say or do?

*William Vaughn Moody.*

## EVE

EVE, with her basket, was  
Deep in the bells and grass,  
Wading in bells and grass  
Up to her knees,  
Picking a dish of sweet  
Berries and plums to eat,  
Down in the bells and grass  
Under the trees.

8

Mute as a mouse in a  
Corner the cobra lay,  
Curled round a bough of the  
Cinnamon tall . . .  
Now to get even and  
Humble proud heaven and  
Now was the moment or  
Never at all.

16

“Eva!” Each syllable  
Light as a flower fell,  
“Eva!” he whispered the  
Wondering maid,  
Soft as a bubble sung  
Out of a linnet’s lung,  
Soft and most silvery  
“Eva!” he said.

24

## Eve

Picture that orchard sprite,  
Eve, with her body white,  
Supple and smooth to her  
Slim finger tips,  
Wondering, listening,  
Listening, wondering,  
Eve with a berry  
Half-way to her lips.

32

Oh had our simple Eve  
Seen through the make-believe!  
Had she but known the  
Pretender he was!  
Out of the boughs he came,  
Whispering still her name,  
Tumbling in twenty rings  
Into the grass.

40

Here was the strangest pair  
In the world anywhere,  
Eve in the bells and grass  
Kneeling, and he  
Telling his story low . . .  
Singing birds saw them go  
Down the dark path to  
The Blasphemous Tree.

48

Oh what a clatter when  
Titmouse and Jenny Wren  
Saw him successful and  
Taking his leave!

325

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

How the birds rated him,  
How they all hated him!  
How they all pitied  
Poor motherless Eve!

56

Picture her crying  
Outside in the lane,  
Eve, with no dish of sweet  
Berries and plums to eat,  
Haunting the gate of the  
Orchard in vain  
Picture the lewd delight  
Under the hill to-night—  
“Eva!” the toast goes round,  
“Eva!” again.

64

*Ralph Hodgson.*

## THE LISTENERS

“**IS THERE** anybody there?” said the Traveller,  
Knocking on the moonlit door;  
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses  
Of the forest’s ferny floor:  
And a bird flew up out of the turret, 5  
Above the Traveller’s head:  
And he smote upon the door again a second time;  
“Is there anybody there?” he said.  
But no one descended to the Traveller;  
No head from the leaf-fringed sill 10  
Leaned over and looked into his gray eyes,  
Where he stood perplexed and still.

## Catharine

But only a host of phantom listeners  
That dwelt in the lone house then  
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight 15  
To that voice from the world of men:  
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark  
stair,  
That goes down to the empty hall,  
Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken  
By the lonely Traveller's call, 20  
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,  
Their stillness answering his cry,  
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,  
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;  
For he suddenly smote on the door, even 25  
Louder, and lifted his head:—  
"Tell them I came, and no one answered,  
That I kept my word," he said.  
Never the least stir made the listeners,  
Though every word he spake 30  
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still  
house  
From the one man left awake:  
Aye, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,  
And the sound of iron on stone,  
And how the silence surged softly backward, 35  
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

*Walter de la Mare.*

## CATHARINE

WE CHILDREN every morn would wait  
For Catharine, at the garden gate;

## Little Masterpieces of English Poetry

Behind school-time, her sunny hair  
Would melt the master's frown of care,  
What time his hand but threatened pain, 5  
Shaking aloft his awful cane;  
So here one summer's morn we wait  
For Catharine at the garden gate.  
To Dave I say—"There's sure to be  
Some coral isle unknown at sea, 10  
And—if I see it first—'tis mine!  
But I'll give it to Catharine."  
"When she grows up," says Dave to me,  
"Some ruler in a far countree,  
Where every voice but his is dumb, 15  
Owner of pearls, and gold, and gum,  
Will build for her a shining throne,  
Higher than his, and near his own;  
And he, who would not list before,  
Will listen to Catharine, and adore 20  
Her face and form; and," Dave went on—  
When came a man there pale and wan,  
Whose face was dark and wet though kind,  
He, coming there, seemed like a wind  
Whose breath is rain, yet will not stop 25  
To give the parchèd flowers a drop:  
"Go, children, to your school," he said,  
"And tell the master Catharine's dead."

*William H. Davies.*















